

# A MANUAL FOR LENT.



F. C. WOODHOUSE.

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**A MANUAL FOR LENT.**





# A MANUAL FOR LENT:

OR

Meditations for Every Day, and for the  
Sundays, and Easter-tide.

BY

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"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem. . . . Let us also go, that we  
may die with Him."

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## PREFACE.

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THE Church's work all along her course is to preach "Christ and Him crucified." This, like the coloured thread that is embedded in every Navy rope, great or small, runs through her teachings and ordinances all the year round. The sweep of her wisdom is vast, but its centre is always the Cross. She wanders far and wide, gathering up and dispensing the Truth, fetching in and tending the sheep of the Good Shepherd, but in Lent she seems to keep near home, with those who have felt the attraction of Him who was "lifted up," who follow Him whithersoever He leads, who feel compelled ever to purge and purify themselves that they may be less unworthy of His love, and that He may "be formed in them," who "as they walk are cleansed," and accompanying with Him are made like Him. Penitence inspired and directed by love is the Christian soul's business during Lent.

The following pages are intended for the use of

those devout and thoughtful persons who understand all this, and who, besides their attendance at the public services of the Church during Lent, desire to add to their private devotions some spiritual reading that will afford matter for meditation and prayer, for recollection and resolution, and will provide thoughts suggestive of thought, and be helpful to them in their endeavour to take a step onward and upward at this time, which will secure an advance in the spiritual life that will never be abandoned, but will become the starting-point for a new effort of the soul Godwards.

The subjects are taken partly from the Old Testament, partly from our Lord's acts and words, and partly from the common experience of earnest Christians "in these dangerous days," when new difficulties or old difficulties revived and remodelled harass the heaven-bound soul. On the Fridays attention is directed to the Cross and Passion of our Lord, and on the first five Sundays some person or incident in the Old Testament, that foreshadows Christ and His work, is dwelt upon.

# CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
ASH WEDNESDAY.—Going up to Jerusalem with Christ . . .	1
THURSDAY.—Life with God—Life without God—Life against God . . . . .	6
FRIDAY.—Lenten Joy . . . . .	11
SATURDAY.—The Silences of God . . . . .	17
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.—Paradise Lost and Restored . . .	21
MONDAY.—The Education of the Conscience . . . . .	25
TUESDAY.—The Word's first Words . . . . .	31
WEDNESDAY.—Man Tempted through his Best . . . . .	37
THURSDAY.—The Family of God . . . . .	41
FRIDAY.—The Companions of the Crucified . . . . .	46
SATURDAY.—The Duty and Dignity of Work . . . . .	51
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.—The Magnificence and Perpetual Example of Abraham's Faith . . . . .	55
MONDAY.—The Reasonableness and the Method of Prayer . .	63
TUESDAY.—Sitting Still . . . . .	72
WEDNESDAY.—Jesus the Citizen . . . . .	77
THURSDAY.—The Imperfection of the World's Best . . .	83
FRIDAY.—Christ's Price: What He was Sold for, and what was Bought with the Money . . . . .	87
SATURDAY.—Safeguards for the Great Middle Class of Chris- tians . . . . .	92
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.—Isaac's Fraud and its Lessons . .	97
MONDAY.—The Mutual Knowledge of Christ and His Faithful Servants . . . . .	102

	PAGE
TUESDAY.—An Apology for Jezebel . . . . .	108
WEDNESDAY.—Living in the World . . . . .	113
THURSDAY.—Breaking Down . . . . .	121
FRIDAY.—The Passion of Christ and His Saints . . . . .	126
SATURDAY.—Christ the Restorer . . . . .	130
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.—Personal Contact with Christ . . . . .	135
MONDAY.—Cheerfulness a Characteristic of Christians . . . . .	141
TUESDAY.—Hearing Music, and Hearing Sermons . . . . .	146
WEDNESDAY.—How to use the World's Favour . . . . .	153
THURSDAY.—The Wild Grapes of Human Nature . . . . .	160
FRIDAY.—The Poor Wise Man Forgotten . . . . .	166
SATURDAY.—Wrong Ideas of God . . . . .	170
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.—Samson a Type of Christ . . . . .	174
MONDAY.—Apes and Peacocks . . . . .	182
TUESDAY.—Using what we have . . . . .	188
WEDNESDAY.—Jesus Asleep . . . . .	193
THURSDAY.—Martyrdom . . . . .	198
FRIDAY.—Death in the House . . . . .	201
SATURDAY.—Spiritual Manhood . . . . .	205
PALM SUNDAY.—Hosanna . . . . .	212
MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.—How to Keep Holy Week . . . . .	218
TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.—The Three Crosses at Calvary . . . . .	223
WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.—Judas a Warning to the most Advanced Christians . . . . .	228
MAUNDY THURSDAY.—Christ the Bread of Life . . . . .	232
GOOD FRIDAY.—The Cross the Centre of the World's Devotion . . . . .	237
EASTER EVE.—The Departed remembering the Means of Grace . . . . .	242
EASTER DAY.—The Crucified at Easter . . . . .	245
EASTER MONDAY.—The Difficulty of Easter Joy . . . . .	250
EASTER TUESDAY.—Spring and the Resurrection . . . . .	254

# A MANUAL FOR LENT.

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ASH WEDNESDAY.

*Going up to Jerusalem with Christ.*

ONCE again Lent has come ; once again let us welcome it ; let us thank God for it ; let us enter upon it with zest and expectation, as upon a season of blessing, a season most fit for us. Let us see in it our Lord holding out to us His pierced hands, full of the very things we need most, which are ready for us to take ; so that by the end of this Lent we may be surely richer, and have taken a good step onward and upward towards our eternal home.

There are many ways of looking at Lent ; there are many thoughts that come to us ; but lest we get confused with their multitude, let us keep to one view, and get it well impressed upon our inner soul, and so start with a definite idea and a plain course before us. Many shrink from Lent as a dreary, painful, forbidding season, and so lose half its blessing and all its sweetness. Away with this ! Let us take up the Cross with a smile ; let us look up to God, and around at our fellow-Christians, and inward at our own hearts, and say as our watchword and motto, "Behold, we go up to Jeru-

salem ;" Jerusalem, the city of peace ; the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ; our very home, where all good things are, and all dear ones ; where all we want, and have wanted so long, will at last be ours.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Our Lord Himself first gave the word, first took the way. We too are His disciples ; as we go, He goes on before us ; we will not leave Him, that where He is, there we may be also, even for ever. Some shrink away cowardly, fearing the length of the way. They are in love with present comfort, and have no courage to lift up the Cross, nor to lay aside for a moment even one thing that brings selfish pleasure ; and so God leaves them alone to have their "good things" here—such poor good things!—instead of the good things He had prepared for them, if they would only have waited a little while. Or else in mercy and love He brings unsought trouble upon them, and so they suffer more, far more, than they who hold out their hands to God, and voluntarily seek for wholesome trial. These are citizens of the world, at home, content ; but "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," not content, not at home here ; seeking a better country ; sure of it ; happy already in the anticipation of its all-satisfying blessedness.

The world one while allures, another while sneers and mocks ; the flesh rebels, complains, entreats ; the evil one plots, schemes, piles up obstacles, and suggests doubts and difficulties ; but "we go up to Jerusalem." Oh, wise and happy choice ! The way is long, and sometimes hard and dreary ; but as we go we forget it all, and break forth into singing. It is hard to give up and leave behind what nature so dearly loves, but lo !



sacrifice brings more delight than indulgence. We lay hold of the crown of thorns, pale with terror; our hands tremble as we raise it to our heads. In that little space we have many times resolved to throw it away; but somehow we place it shuddering upon our heads; and lo! its thorns are gone, and there are flowers there instead. We try to have fellowship with Christ in His Passion; we take up the Cross; we court pain, in loving sympathy with Him; but lo! He is always beforehand with us. He has borne all pain Himself; He has taken away the sting of it; He has drained out the power of all; these mortifications do but give us joy and peace. Such is the testimony of all those who have gone this way before us. Martyrs go smiling to death, and while beast and fire and torment are doing their worst, they are thanking and praising God for His goodness, because now indeed they "go up to Jerusalem." Men and women, urged by an irresistible instinct, give up wealth and ease and high place, and all that the natural heart holds dearest and best, and in poverty and pain and hard work are joyous as children. Others in weary lifelong sickness and agony, others in dishonour and unmerited shame, others in thankless toil and drudgery, are more than content, and bear in their sweet calm faces the sure evidence of a peaceful and happy heart within. And some, not content with the God-sent ills and pains of life, have greedily made for themselves mortifications fearful to human nature, and in them have slaked their thirst for sympathy with Christ in His Passion, and have found joy which no words could express; and upon their deathbeds have even laughed aloud for irrepressible delight, because now they were to "go up to Jerusalem."

Such things indeed are not for us ; they are so far above us that they seem to many unreal, incredible, almost wrong. To every man is his proper gift of God. These are experts in the art of holiness and the imitation of Christ, we are but poorest bunglers. These are the aristocracy of the heavenly Jerusalem ; we confessedly are but of the lowest of the people. Yet we too are called to be fellow-citizens with the saints ; a long way behind indeed, halting, falling, stopping, sometimes, alas ! even going back. How different from those who travel in the greatness of their strength ; yet we too, poor we, we too "go up to Jerusalem ;" and for us, in our measure, there is this joyousness which belongs to all those who go by that way of sorrows.

Let these then, and such as these, be our thoughts as we enter upon another Lent. Let us welcome it as a merciful opportunity of making a new beginning ; let us turn our faces full upon the great end, and once more resolve not to miss our glorious destiny ; and let us add to this the thought that this may be our last Lent, and that tremendous and eternal issues may depend upon our response to this call. There is a time for all things. We cannot always be laughing ; we cannot always be gay and thoughtless ; we are not fit for butterfly life, always flitting lightly hither and thither, without grave duty or busy haste, always sipping the sweet only. Men and women with immortal souls throbbing, heaving, working in their bosoms were made for something graver, better, higher than this.

From the very beginning of Christianity Lent has been observed ; it ought not to be necessary nowadays to explain what it means, nor to tell Christians how to observe it. And yet in how many houses, and that of

Churchmen, will it make no difference whatever; in how many hearts will it have no influence! They need to be told that prayer, fasting, and almsgiving have ever been the Church's threefold rule of life for Lent. They need to have it explained to them that marriage, feasting, and pleasuring of all kinds have these many centuries been esteemed out of place in this holy season. It is a shame that it is needful thus to speak, as to babes in Christian lore, and yet it is not unnecessary. At least let us do something for love of Him whose death for us this season commemorates; at least let us remind ourselves that we are come to a season of blessing; and as we love our own salvation, let us not miss the blessing, which surely may be ours, as it will surely be obtained by many though we reject it. Something for love of Christ and for our own soul's health, something let us do. We live under a system of liberty, whether for good or for evil, that leaves every one almost entirely responsible to God alone; let us not abuse our liberty.

If we have begun before, we shall all the more readily make a new beginning now; for do we not feel that we need it? If we have yet to begin, why not now? How long shall we halt between two opinions? How long shall we go on, day by day, we know not whither? Now is the time for a new beginning; now let us make choice of our aim in life; now let us have a system, a purpose; now let us begin to be in earnest. The banner of the Cross is lifted up afresh; our Lord cries, "Who is on My side, who?" He calls to all and to each; and everywhere penitent souls, loving souls, holy souls, hear His call and turn to follow Him; and the bright light of heaven beams already upon their faces as they turn

thitherward; and the cry bursts out in chorus, as the sound of many waters, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Shall we stand apart and be left behind?

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### THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY.

#### *Life with God—Life without God—Life against God.*

Lent is a time for thinking about our spiritual state, for seeing how we stand with God, how we are living in His sight. Now there are three possibilities in man's life with respect to God: life with God, life without God, and life against God. The first is God's will for man; the other two are alternatives open to man by virtue of his inalienable liberty.

Life against God! can it be? Surely it can be; it has been, and it is. Revelation tells us of other creatures of God, free like ourselves, hosts of spiritual beings who once set themselves against God; and the life of opposition and rebellion and hatred was not crushed out by God, as we might have expected, in a moment. It goes on seemingly for ages; it appears to prosper; God seems weak; evil seems more powerful than good; men look on and are amazed and bewildered.

Life against God! It has been seen in the world. The life of Cain, of Lamech, of the men before the Flood, of the builders of Babel. The life of many who have stood up against God in mad rebellion, in conscious hatred, in blind denial of His being, His rights, His attributes; the life of atheism, the life of heresy. What it really is was

seen eighteen hundred years ago. God came into His own world, hiding, or at least veiling, His divinity under human attributes ; all God's perfections reflected as far as they could be on the human manifestation ; a perfect man, but at the same time a revelation of God. And men hated God, conspired and plotted against Him, and finally put Him to death !

It goes on still, this rebellion against God, this rejection of Jesus Christ and His revelation of God and of God's will, and of man's life with God as it is in heaven. Pride of intellect is one chief root and source of this life against God. Pride of power makes kings and governments set themselves against God. Pride of wealth turns men's heads, and makes them live the life against God. The lusts of the flesh rave against subjection and rebel against all authority, till men dare God to do His worst. The spirit of the world is in direct enmity against God, and it enters in and dwells and rules in the hearts of men and women ; and they live before our eyes the life against God, shameless, smiling, sneering, contemptuous, triumphant in their violation of the laws of God and the pattern human life of Jesus Christ.

Can we not look into our hearts and see the possibility of all this ? It does not come all at once, but gradually. It grows upon a man by his keeping away from God and the things of God, by his getting familiar with evil, till men become like the lost spirits, hating God, rebelling against God and against His laws ; living lawless lives, so that even their fellow-men find them dangerous, and have to lay hold of them and shut them up that they may not do harm, and sometimes put them out of the world as we destroy wild beasts and venomous serpents.

Life against God ! Oh, the degradation ! oh, the misery of this life ! Oh, the mad folly of it ! For God must be lord and master of His own world and His own creatures ; He must put down at last all rebellion. We may fight against God for a little while, but we must be beaten at last, and, with the evil spirits that rebelled, we must be hurled away from His presence, crushed by His anger because we would not be won by His love.

Then there is life without God. No open denial, no wilful rebellion ; profession of faith and obedience, but mere animal life, mere humanity ; man without the Man Christ Jesus ; the natural with nothing supernatural ; eating, sleeping, working, marrying, talking, rising in the world perhaps, suffering, enjoying ; forms of worship perhaps, forms of prayer sometimes ; but still, for all that, life without God.

Alas ! this life is common ; it seems to become more common. The huge towns of modern civilisation foster this life. Men live without prayer, without worship, without thought or recognition of God. Their children grow up seeing this and nothing else ; they have no habits of religion, they feel no want of it, no fear, no shame, because they have it not ; many ignorant of the very name of God.

Can we not see the possibility of this too in our own hearts ? Are we not naturally disposed to do our own will, and to go our own way, to save ourselves trouble, to live as if we were our own masters, putting off duties, only doing what we like, what is pleasant, and postponing all that is disagreeable till we get out of the habit of religion, and live like mere animals, as if we had no souls, no master, and should not have to stand one day and give account to God of what we have done in the life that He

has given us ; as if we were not His creatures, made by Him ; as we ourselves may make something with our hands and do what we like with it ?

Oh, it is so easy to let life slip away without thought ! Our natural indolence helps it on ; present pleasures, present advantage, doing as other people do, being afraid of being laughed at, putting off the time of amendment ; till suddenly a grave opens unexpectedly under our feet, and down we go, and our soul stands before our Judge, unpardoned, lost ; when we never intended it should come to that, but always intended to turn to God some day. Oh, poor, foolish souls, that never intended to be lost ; that knew what was right so well ; that were always going to do right, going to turn over a new leaf, but never did ! Their day of grace came to an end before they expected it, and now they find no place of repentance ; shut out like the foolish virgins, and they knocking and praying in vain, hearing only the final, inexorable answer—

“ Too late ! too late ! ye cannot enter now.”

Oh, poor foolish souls ! turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? Now, before it is too late ; now, while your hearts are not yet too hard ; now, while you hear the voice of your loving Saviour inviting you to come to Him and be pardoned and saved ; now, while you may, go down on your knees and say, “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” and you shall find rest to your souls.

There is still the third alternative—life with God ; the life of heaven adapted to the possibilities of earth ; the life in imitation of the Man Christ Jesus ; the life which the Church provides for and helps. It begins with Baptism ; all along its course it keeps its hold upon

God by ever-living, ever-active faith, by prayer and sacraments, by manifold and constant intercourse, God with man, man with God. There are degrees in the intimacy of the relationship; some walk with God ever, God in all their thoughts, their souls open only to Him, ever receiving and assimilating graces, growing, gaining power, preparing for that life in the presence of God which St. John reveals. But many truly have this life with God though they cannot attain to these heights of sanctity. The life of the humble struggling Christian, sorely tried, weak, falling not a little, not seldom, yet rising again and struggling on, raised up by the pitiful mercy of God, clinging to the hand of God, never wandering very far from Him, never long away from Him, never at rest but with Him. Such confess that they are not better than their neighbours. They acknowledge that they are but poor sinful people, with many faults, many failings; that they very often do wrong, that they very often leave undone what they ought to do. But they do try to amend; they do repent whenever they fall; they do return to their Heavenly Father every night before they go to sleep, and confess to Him their sins and shortcomings, and ask Him to forgive them for Jesus' sake. They do pray for help not to sin again; they do wish and try to be better; they do resist when tempted; they do not mind suffering rather than do wrong; they do come to God for help in the place and in the way in which He has promised to meet them. They are sinners, but they are penitent sinners, pardoned sinners; and having done what their Lord bids them, they put their whole trust in His mercy, for life, for death, for eternity. The thrones and high places of heaven are not for such as they, but they will not therefore be excluded.



In the multitude that no man can number their places will be found, their voices will help to make up that mighty hymn that rolls through heaven's courts like the never-ceasing cadence of the sea breaking upon its echoing shores: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation."

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FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY.

*Lenten Joy.*

There are two chief thoughts which the Church would bring before us, till they live and work in our hearts, during the season of Lent. One is the Passion of our Lord; the other is our own personal penitence. There is a shadowy gloom that broods over the whole season, partly the darkness that for those three hours, and ever since, hangs about the Cross; partly the solitary darkness that all penitents instinctively seek, as they hide themselves from the world's eyes, and all alone gaze down into the forbidding secret places of their own hearts. Men and women hide their bodily infirmities carefully from the eyes of others; they love not even to see them themselves; they will not look and be distressed and ashamed more than they are obliged; they forget them as far as they can, for even to think of them brings a pang of pain, a blush of degradation.

The season of Lent is to many more or less repulsive

and unwelcome. We read of those whose whole lives was a perpetual Lent, and to most persons the thought is simply painful and revolting. We are afraid to disregard altogether the voice of the Church, but we obey grudgingly and of necessity, catching at excuses, longing to be free. We wince under the sense of our being out of harmony with the world. One smiles in sublime pity at our "grovelling and unmanly superstition;" another goes cheerily on, all days and times alike to him; another gravely quotes Scripture, and fears we are very far from the simplicity of the Gospel. All this time our hearts know their own bitterness. "Is it any good after all? Are we any the better for it? If we do it so half-heartedly, would it not be better not to pretend to do it at all? would it not be better to go the common way, and take our chance with the rest?"

Let us then try and think if there is not something to help us, if we are so tried. Let us search for some antidote for this gloom, this repugnance to Lent and its duties. Let us see if there is anything that will make it more real to us, and therefore more satisfactory, more profitable. Now is there not such a help in that remarkable statement respecting our Lord in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame?"

Our Lord's whole life was but a pilgrimage to the Cross. It was a Lent of thirty-three years with a real Good Friday at the end. It is quite evident that His human soul bowed and bent beneath the ever-increasing weight of the approaching climax, "My heaviness is ever in My sight." The Gospels tell us something, the Psalms tell us more, of the hidden apprehension of our Lord as step by step He drew nearer to the dreadful end,

till at last He cries out in agony, praying that the cup might pass from Him.

It is always thus. The Cross is always painful. The repugnance that Lent arouses within us is but human nature shrinking from the Cross. As He was, so are we. Human nature likes ease, comforts, pleasures. If we resent any allusion to our bodily infirmities, and will not even think of them ourselves more than we can help, what wonder that we are unwilling to remember sins and falls, to enter upon the way of penitence, to "take up" the Cross over and above the troubles that come involuntarily upon us?

Notice then what is said in these words of the mind of Christ in the midst of the way of the Cross. What is said to have sustained Him even when human nature cried out at the terrible prospect and under the more intolerable reality? It was the joy of the end; "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." Was it so? Was Christ so human as this? Was He made so like His brethren, that but for hope, but for the great reward, but for the blessed and eternal fruit of His Passion, He could never have undertaken it, never have borne it? So indeed it would seem. And more than that; this great hope of infinite love, that "He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," this certainty that His Passion would redeem the world and give heaven again to millions of happy beings, this not only made the Cross tolerable and the shame consistent with life, but it gave positive joy; it urged Him to set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem; it made Him straitened and pained till all should be accomplished. When in the Garden the impending terror lowered upon His human soul, and closed in upon Him,

and bowed and crushed Him down till life itself seemed to be forced out of His body before the time, what could that messenger from heaven whisper in His ear that would be comfort and strength to Him at such a time? Can we think of anything but this eternal joy of the end—a universe redeemed, countless souls happy for all eternity, because He had drunk that cup?

Such, then, was Christ in the days of His flesh. Now see how godly and Christ-like men have discovered and used this same secret of endurance and joy in the midst of the sufferings of the Cross. The whole chapter that precedes the words already quoted is full of instances. The writer begins with Abel, the first martyr, and then enumerates the worthies of faith that followed him, till they come too thickly, and he can but give a bare list of names; and then, time failing him, a hasty catalogue of deeds, of which thousands had been the common doers. And what does he say sustained all these and made them glad martyrs and confessors, even in those old-world days “esteeming the reproach of Christ” better than all earthly good things? It was always “the joy set before them;” “the city that hath foundation;” the promise of Him who is faithful and cannot lie; “the recompense of the reward;” the “better resurrection.” It was this faith that saw on into the far-off future; this hope that laid hold of the eternal, the invisible, that made Peter cry out, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head;” it was this that made James and John volunteer to endure Christ’s baptism and drink His cup; it was this that made many take joyfully to the spoiling of their goods, glory in tribulation, and count the loss of life a blessed gain, reckoning their sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory set before them. It was forget-

fulness of this that made Esau a perpetual warning, held up in sad contrast, profane, without place of repentance, because he would have the little present joy instead of the great lasting honour. It is this that has made men pray for the knowledge and experience of God as "a consuming fire," that they might be purged and purified as silver is tried before the great day came. It is this that has made many a martyr's heart calm and joyous when the people's cry rose like thunder or the sound of many waters, "The Christians to the lions!" and taught them to forgive, and even love and bless their persecutors, who were the agents to bring them to "the joy set before them." It is this that has decked with a never-fading smile the worn face of the bedridden sufferer, while the rich and healthy have chafed and sighed till their faces have been set into a very mask of discontent. It is this that has taught men and women to give up all for Christ, trusting to His promise, which they dared to take quite literally; and in the midst of the loss of all things, and in services loathed and shrunk from by human nature, they have felt only all too happy, free from all care, all fear, quite radiant with happiness, without one sorrow, one trace of alloy.

Can we, then, but enter into this spirit, Lent will be no longer a burden, gloomy and repulsive. We see the working of this spirit in all the godly from Abel to the servant of God that is still among us; we see it even in Christ Himself. We may even see a similar phenomenon in common things of everyday life. We see a man offer his living flesh to the surgeon's knife because of "the joy set before him" of ease and health. We see the tender and delicate woman brave the toils, and misery, and rudeness of long travel by land and sea for

"the joy set before her" of her child's loved presence. We see thousands toiling, suffering, fighting, persevering for some "joy set before them," sacrificing the good present for the better future. They do it to obtain a temporal joy; shall not we do it for joy that fadeth not away?

Oh, then, let us look on to "the joy set before us;" let us look at our sins as so many obstacles and barriers in the way of our happiness; and shall we not hasten to embrace all means that may do away with them, and fit our souls to be with God? Let us look at seductive temptations and gilded gauds of the world as so many deadly foes to our happiness, enemies that would snatch from us "the joy set before us;" and shall we not know how to meet, to fight, to trample them underfoot? Let us see rivals to our Lord, our Lover, our one dear Friend in the world's creatures, things, or persons that would separate us from the love of Christ; and shall we not firmly hide our eyes from them, and gladly listen to the voice of the Church calling us to keep Lent; calling us aside from the blandishments of these tempters to the foot of the Cross, where we are brought to our right mind, where we see all things clearly, where we are near our Lord, safe under the shadow of His sorrow, our present light affliction, yet warmed, sustained, and cheered by the unspeakable inner consciousness of His joy? Let us pray ever and strive after this faith of God's saints, so will Lent be to us no more dull and repulsive, but wholesome, welcome, fruitful of peace and joy.

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## SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY.

*The Silences of God.*

There is a meaning not only in the words, but in the silences of God. Man's part is not only to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," but to "be still, and know that He is God." God's revelation of Himself by words is but a small thing compared with His revelation of Himself in silence. Ages passed over the world while it was being prepared for man, and God's voice was not heard. His laws worked out their wondrous results in silence; and now by the powers of mind and reason with which God has endowed us, we may search and examine the footsteps of God through creation, and learn much.

Take a broad view of man's history in the world, and see how little God has said to him. For the most part God has been silent. And so when the Son of God Himself came into the world, we are not surprised to find that the same law manifested itself. Even His coming was in silence and secrecy. "While all things were in quiet silence, and night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word leaped down from Heaven out of Thy royal throne." For a moment there were signs, heaven opened, angels hymning audibly, shepherds adoring, wise men led by a star coming from the far East, and worshipping, but there soon came silence again. The Babe was carried away into Egypt; and no one knew where He was. Bethlehem, of which the prophets had written, lost Him, and He lay hidden and unrecognised in ignominious Nazareth.

The heaven-taught Evangelists presently set themselves to record that life of God manifest in the flesh. Oh what golden pages! what infinite stores they had to draw from! what numberless words and acts and lessons they had to hand down to expectant generations! Four write, yet, for the most part, they do but repeat the same particulars; what they say is little compared with what they omit. Again the silence is vastly greater than the revelation by words. The Lord was for thirty-three years among men, yet almost all is lost in silence. From the Nativity we pass to the last three years. One short chapter alone contains all that we know of the Childhood, the Boyhood, the daily toil and life of the Man Jesus at Nazareth, the Carpenter, God manifest, yet veiled and hidden, the Word uttered, and then immediately shrouded in silence!

How mysterious all this is! how contrary to what we should have expected! how disappointing! how wasteful it seems! what a loss to us! how precious and helpful would words have been instead of this baffling, barren, tantalising silence! The life of the perfect man, the citizen, the subject, the son, the working man, why was it not all written for our learning? Could anything have been more precious? Is anything more wanted now and always than the example of holy life in the midst of the world? Oh why was that perfect life lived, and no record given us, to be our guide to help us in the many perplexing difficulties of life, to lead those right who earnestly desire to be taught, and who complain that they have no guide, no chart, no strong, firm, leading hand in the dark misty, mazy paths of life?



What am I?  
An infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light,  
And with no language but a cry !

And now He has gone, and the world is left again ; “we see not our tokens, there is no prophet among us, not one that understandeth.” The Word of God was revealed for a little while in one place, and now again there is silence ; no word is seen or heard. The Book is silent ; the voice of God is silent ; till the ancient event and position seem to be repeated, but with a sad reversal ; God’s people call upon Him, “but there is neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth ;” and unbelievers stand by and mock, and say, “Cry aloud, for He is a God.”

But what is the godly man’s answer ? “Though I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my trust in God.” He turns back to the records and experience of the past. If there is no voice, then he will listen, and learn from the silence of God. He ponders till he sees certainly that God’s silences always demand patience of man, always inspire hope, because they are always times of preparation for some manifestation of God’s power, and of His people’s deliverance. When Jericho was long compassed in silence, it was God’s way of delivering it into His people’s hand without effort of theirs, and so opening the way to them into their promised inheritance and home. The dead silence of the Evangelists respecting those thirty mysterious years is the prelude to the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the miracles, the Passion, with all their inexhaustible teaching and consolation. The half hour’s silence in heaven that St. John records, was followed by the last great events that ushered in the consummation

of all things, the conquest of evil, the triumph of good, the vindication of God, and the final consolation of His people.

Are we in that time now? It may be so; and if not in that time itself, we are certainly in such a time, for there are anticipations of all the great acts of God's providence. We are in a time of silence; a silence that may be felt. There is darkness upon men's souls, and they cry out for light and guidance, and there is no reply. Many begin to blaspheme. They deny that there is any light, any God; they cast away faith and hope, and sit down in blank despair, or plod through life like the beasts, living their life, dying their death.

Shall we, too, do this? No, that we will not. It is a time of silence, but we have learned long ago what the silences of God mean, and how to bear them. It is a time of darkness, but God's people have some light in their dwelling. His Word is "a lantern unto their feet," when His face is not seen and His voice is not heard. When the sun is gone, the moon and the stars give some light. The Church reflects the brightness of her absent and unseen Lord; the saints set forth His example and help us to follow Him.

Besides, in times of silence and darkness and perplexity, there are sudden Epiphanies. Christ is found in the Temple of God; He manifests Himself; and His disciples see, believe, and rejoice. They are praying and waiting and wondering, like the people were when Zacharias was burning incense and talking with the angel; but God's time of mercy and deliverance is at hand, though His priests may be dumb and unable to tell the glad tidings. Nay, why is there silence in heaven? and why do God's people wait and look up wearily, and

almost in despair? Is it not because the great High Priest has gone within the veil to present the Blood that He has shed? He is hidden, but He is not idle. He is unseen, but He is working mightily.

The times of silence are always God's working times, and man can but stand by and wait, like Israel on the shore of the Red Sea. Waiting is always tedious; time always seems long; but the time is measured and determined, and it is not really long, it is but "half an hour." "In your patience possess ye your souls." "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

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### FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

#### *Paradise Lost, and Restored.*

"In order to understand and interpret the Old Testament, we must read the New Testament;" such was the judgment of the great St. Augustine. "The New Testament," he said, "is enfolded in the Old Testament; the Old Testament is unfolded in the New Testament." When, therefore, on Septuagesima Sunday, the Church first speaks to us of the coming seasons of Lent and Passiontide, she bids us read the beginning of the record of man's history in Genesis; not even the story of the Fall, which made the Atonement necessary, but the account given us of man's original state of innocence, which is the type and the model of his restored condition through the great work of Christ.

When our Lord was hanging upon the Cross He pro-

mised to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" there is the end, but we must begin now at the beginning, and learn what that Paradise was which the first Adam inherited, enjoyed, and lost. In this way we must seek and find the true solution of the difficulties that are found in the early chapters of the Old Testament. Creation and man's early history are there viewed through a particular medium, the atmosphere of the Atonement. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" is to be sought and found there, where we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

See then the man made by the hand of God from the dust of the ground; into his nostrils is breathed a living soul; he has knowledge, reason, speech, love of God, authority over all the lower creation; he is free, master of himself. He is led from the external world into the Paradise prepared for him. It is not his birthright; he belongs to the world, and is brought out from it into that privileged place which he possesses on the terms of a covenant; his state is not that of nature, but of grace; he stands by faith and obedience, not by right, not without risk of fall. There he has to work; the garden has to be dressed and kept.

Here then we see, as in a mirror, our privileged position as Christians, members of the Church of God, and our greater glory yet to come. For this garden into which Adam is removed out of the wide world, where he is to dwell blessed, yet still upon trial, till the time of his translation to the nearer presence of God, is surely the type of the Church of Christ, into which we are brought at our baptism out of the world in which we are by nature born. "My beloved is a garden enclosed," such is the

mystical prophecy of the Church, the spouse of Christ. Those goodly trees are the saints of God ; as David says, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side." Those flowers of every hue, bright, fragrant, varied, are the holy ones of God ; white lilies, pure virgin hearts ; violets, "widows, indeed," "given to prayer and good works ;" roses, "the noble army of martyrs" baptized in blood. That mysterious river that waters the garden, and then parts into four heads and refreshes the world outside, seems to point to the waters of baptism ; "I came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. I said, I will water abundantly my garden bed ; and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea ; behold I have not laboured for myself alone, but for all them that seek wisdom." Or it is the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ—one Gospel, having its source in the Holy Spirit of God, but presently divided into four channels by the four Evangelists, all ministering the same "living water," but each in his own way as the Spirit gives him utterance ? Those mystic countries where the streams flow rich in gold and precious stones, are the lands where they dwell who practise the Gospel precepts, whose souls "are as a watered garden," who find "wisdom more precious than rubies," who build upon the one foundation, not "wood, hay, and stubble," but "gold, silver, and precious stones." In the midst of the garden there stands a tree conspicuous above all others, its fruit immortality, a remedy for all ills, a source of all blessings ; this is the Cross of Christ ; that in which alone the Church and the Christian glory, the centre of all hopes, the source of all good. Its fruit is Christ Himself.

Yes, these things are a shadow of good things to come.

Go to Revelation and you will find Genesis, read Genesis and you will understand it by Revelation : "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Read the Gospels and you will find such words as these : "I am the true vine ;" "I am the bread of life, that a man may eat thereof and not die ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." It was not enough for Adam to be in Paradise, not enough for him to eat of every tree of the garden, he must eat of that one Tree of Life if he would live for ever, resist all decay, be ever young, ever healthy, joyous. So is it still ; it is well to be in the Church ; it is a great privilege to be baptized into Christ, to hear the Gospel ; but if we would live for ever we must partake of Christ and be made one with Him.

But the parallel is not yet complete. Paradise is restored to us in the Church ; but as Adam in Paradise had his probation and trial, so must we have ours. There was the Forbidden Tree, and it has its representative still. For what was that tree of old ? It certainly was not anything that was in itself evil, for God had pronounced all things good ; only it pleased God to forbid man to eat of it as a trial of obedience, as a test of love. So it is with us. We have a command, "Do this, eat this," just as Adam was bidden to eat of the Tree of Life ; and there is a command, "Thou shalt not do this and that." Sin, like some spreading tree, has many branches, leaves, fruits, but all sins have but one root, disobedience to God's word. Still the tempter has access to the garden, and calls evil good and good evil. The second Adam Himself was tried like the first. He too was tempted. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was recommended to Him by the same subtle enemy. Only His temptation

was not in a garden of beauty, but in a waste wilderness, in the midst of wild beasts, for sin had marred God's work. So we may see ourselves each like Adam on his trial ; the Tree of Life to sustain, God's gifts all about us and within us, but the serpent whispering temptation in our ears. There is no new thing under the sun ; that which has been is that which is. Yes, and that which shall be ; for what is the promised home of the faithful ? Still Paradise ; a Paradise of waiting rest after death ; a Paradise of perfect joy in God after resurrection ; as it is written, "The Lord shall comfort Zion, He shall make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." Like this is the vision of St. John ; he too describes heaven under the old similitudes ; he speaks of a garden, a river, the Tree of Life, gold and precious stones ; only there is no tree of trial, no serpent. So do Genesis and Revelation meet in Christ, who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

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#### MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

##### *The Education of the Conscience.*

Conscience is the guide of life. Every one has a conscience. It is a reality and a fact. It is only bad and desperate men that say, "Conscience is but a word that cowards use." But conscience may be undeveloped, uneducated ; or it may be suppressed and overborne ; or it may be resisted and successfully opposed ; or it may be misguided, perverted, or depraved.

There is the conscience of the nation, which is some-

times called "Public Opinion." There is the conscience of particular bodies and companies of men ; and there is the conscience of the individual. Compare the public opinion of the ancient Romans, or of some savage people now, with the public opinion or conscience of our own nation. Look out upon men of the day, men of our own acquaintance, and see how various are their standards of life and duty. Yet we may suppose that they obey the dictates of their conscience, and do what they think is right. Look at Saul of Tarsus persecuting inoffensive, unresisting Christians ; he tells us himself, he did it in obedience to his conscience, "I verily thought that I ought to do so." Look at the chief priests, whose conscientious scruples would not allow them to put the thirty pieces of silver into the treasury, and forbade them to put foot inside Pilate's court, who nevertheless for envy delivered the Holy One to death, and presently lied and bribed to hide the fact of His Resurrection. They strained out the gnat and swallowed the camel.

Many men follow the guidance of their conscience, but their conscience misleads them ; just as a ship is taken out of her course, because she is steered by a compass that has not been regulated but is deflected by the presence of iron. See Abraham and others with several wives ; notice the evasions and untruthfulness of Jacob and others ; the exterminating wars of Israel ; the maintenance of slavery ; the cruel punishments ; the involving of innocent wives and children in the doom of the guilty heads of families. Public opinion, the conscience of the nation at the time, approved all this. In these days we could not approve of these things. What does this mean then, but that there has been an upward progress in the tone of public opinion ? Or take a more recent instance ; read the words



which Shakespeare, or Spenser, or Chaucer puts into the mouths of English ladies of their day, and see how a purer and more refined style has been developed. Read how gentlemen and ladies amused themselves in former times. Public opinion nowadays abominates much that they did and enjoyed, as coarse, cruel, and horrible.

There has been progress; the public conscience has been educated and purified. This is a consoling fact in the midst of much that we deplore in the outlook of the present day. Or, to make the evidence more striking, compare Africa, or China, or India with any European country, and say whether the conscience of this last is not a higher, holier, more blessed guide than that of any of those undeveloped countries. There is no doubt that God is educating mankind; the process may be slow, may be retarded by man's wilfulness and stupidity; there may be checks and even periods of retrogression; nay, the good purpose of God may be altogether frustrated if man will not submit himself to God's will and way; but as we look back over centuries and generations, we do certainly see the education of conscience, and the consequent advancement of mankind in moral dignity and godlike uprightness.

Now what is true of the world at large, and of mankind in general, is true, or ought to be, of each individual. Each man is a world in himself; our short life is intended to be a time of education, progress, development. We see this evidently in the body. The body begins in a low, animal, insensible condition, and gradually develops in capacity, power, beauty. So the mind at first is feeble, ignorant, empty; it is trained, its powers are evolved; it stores itself with knowledge and experience, and year by year gains strength and advances towards perfection.

The same law ought to operate with respect to the conscience. The man who lives as God would have him live, advances in spiritual knowledge and experience. The image of God is gradually formed, filled up, made more vivid. The conscience is ever being formed and reformed. Its rule and standard advance; its perception of truth is quickened; its power and irresistible authority spread their influence more and more over every act and every thought. It becomes like a bright immaculate mirror to reflect the light of God's countenance; an exquisitely sensitive organ that responds to the least movement of the will of God; an unerring compass that ever points to the feet of God, and guides the man through life's storms and darkness straight to the haven where he would be, the home of his Father in heaven. This is the ideal. This is what should be. Christianity is to the conscience what nineteenth century science and discovery are to the mind. We start where others ended, or even further on. The old world worthies were but servants of God; we are God's sons; they spent their lives under God's roof indeed, but in the back parts of His house, the place of servants; we live as children live, ever with our Father. They knew but little of God, His will, His thoughts, His ways; we know much. They were like the blind, feeling, listening, groping, conjecturing, in the dark; we have heard the word, "Receive thy sight," and may look up at the face of God manifest in the flesh, the example of life, the pattern man, the perfect model of all holy living. There is nothing wanting but to practise what we know, to copy what is before us.

As the painter educates eye and hand by unceasing study of nature and life-long practice; as the musician trains his inner ear to listen to the inspirations of a cultivated

imagination, and saturates his whole self with melody till his hands almost unconsciously obey the unspoken impulse, and tell others in audible tones what has been created in the secret silence of his soul ; so the educated and highly trained conscience of the saint transforms the man into a presentment of Jesus Christ, whose meat and drink is to do His Father's will, and of whom He says, "This is my beloved Son, in Him I am well pleased." Why are not all men thus? Because their conscience is uneducated, neglected, perverted, sickly or seared. "Conscience in many men is like an English sovereign ; it reigns, but it does not govern. Its function is merely to give a formal assent to the bills passed by the passions, and it knows, if it opposes what these are really bent upon, that ten to one it will be obliged to abdicate." Look out upon mankind, and see how the minds and bodies of men fail and fall short of the human ideal, and you see a picture and parable of the diseased or dwarfed consciences that make men spiritually babies, idiots, dwarfs, or monsters. See that man go smiling through life, neglecting almost every higher duty, no better than a respectable heathen, with no spiritual instincts, desires, or aspirations, yet perfectly satisfied with himself. What is the reason? His conscience is uneducated. Go to sick beds, and see men and women die calmly without sign of repentance, without sense of sin, or yearning for a Saviour, and nothing can rouse them. Why? Their conscience is uneducated, undeveloped, paralysed, diseased. Read of murderers using unctuous phrases, in taking leave of their partners in guilt, and saying that they will meet again in heaven. How can we explain these things, but by saying, that their conscience has been seared as by a hot iron, and has lost all feeling, all life?

“There are men who take some will-of-the-wisp as their guide in life, which is the mere miasma of their fancies and their passions, and follow it as if it were the Pillar of Fire, which was sent to point their course amid the pathless wilderness and the forest’s gloom.” There are men who pride themselves upon being “conscientious,” who are nevertheless most wrong-headed, most mischievous; for their conscience is uneducated; and sometimes, “other voices usurp the functions of conscience, forge its signature, speak in its name, and imitate its very tones.” Men live mere animal lives; men mix only with what is like themselves; till, like Nebuchadnezzar, a “beast’s heart is given to them.” They have no shame because of their grovelling lives, no desire for higher things, no belief even in the existence of a nobler order of men than themselves; till it seems as hopeless to rouse them to a sense of their true calling, as it would be to exhort a horse or an ox to become a man. Why is earnest preaching so ineffective? Why are means of grace neglected, Christian seasons passed over, as if men and women had outgrown such helps? Why is there no advance, no improvement, in so many? Why is the spiritual appetite so dull? Why is the standard of devotional life so low, so unalterable? The answer to all these questions is the same. The fault is in the conscience. The sun shines, and all nature smiles, but the blind man sees nothing. Sweetest harmonies fill listening souls with ecstasy, but the deaf man hears nothing. The world is busy and eager, but the dead man lies still, and it is all nothing to him. So truth, and light, and purity, and the imitation of Christ, are held up by the Church before the eyes and hearts of men, but they see nothing desirable; they feel no impulse to make them

their own. Their conscience does not reproach, or urge.

It has been said that a wise man's education goes on to the end of his life ; so let the education of our conscience be part of our daily, our life-long work. Like a prudent shipmaster, let us verify our compass frequently. Let us compare our rule of life with God's Word, and with the pattern life of the man Christ Jesus. Above all, let us ever pray for light and guidance, "From blindness of heart, Good Lord, deliver us." "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," be this our daily cry ; and may the daily response be to us, as to him who so cried to the Lord of old, "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee."

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## TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

### *The Word's First Words.*

All that we know of our Lord's boyhood and youth is told in a few verses. He lived thirty-three years in the world, and of thirty years we know nothing. His ministry was but of three years' duration ; His preparation for it was thirty years. The world's way and God's way are diverse and opposite. The world calls this waste of time, talent, opportunity. The world likes haste and dash ; it favours youthful precociousness and self-assertion. God works slowly, in silence, with a lavish expenditure, and with hidden purpose.

The one record of our Lord's youth and early manhood is but this, "He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." A mean city, poor peasant

parents, a menial occupation, subjection, obscurity, this was the chosen preparation for the life of the Redeemer, this was the human life of God manifest in the flesh, in all but three years. Must not all this be full of meaning and teaching? Could it be otherwise? All was precisely chosen; all has deepest meaning. They who would follow Christ and learn of Him, will find life-long lessons here. Many a difficulty in the history of the Church, and many a hard question in the inner life of the soul, will find their solution by analogy, when set side by side with the life of Christ, so different from the world's ways, and man's natural ideas and impulses.

It is a lesson that needs much and long learning, that spiritual things do not follow the laws of natural things; that Christ and the world are not only different, but opposite and at enmity; and that the Christian must take his part with Christ for weal and woe. Over the whole life of Christ the shadow of Calvary loomed and lowered; and the Christian dare not be altogether without the Cross, even in his freest and happiest hours. When the man of science looks back upon the bygone ages of the earth, how eagerly he scrutinises some unique fossil that has been preserved, knowing that it has much to tell him that he can by no other means learn. So the spiritual student, yearning for more knowledge of his Lord, handles with minute inspection this one record of Christ's youthful life. If the silence is full of teaching, the revealed event must much more be worth examining in its every detail. We should like to know why the age of twelve was selected, for we know that there is no haphazard in the things of God. When so much has not been preserved to us of the events of His life, we must be sure there is special reason in each fact that has been saved

from that vast lost treasure, out of which St. John tells us so many books might have been written, but were not. A Babe, a Boy, a Man in His full strength, this is the recorded outline of the life of Christ. Adam came into the world at his full man's estate, Christ came as men now come, that He might be truly one of us. Only He took no part in sickness, old age, and decay, for they could not touch His pure, sinless body. So there may be growth up to perfection, but there ought to be no disease, no ruin, no death, in those that are Christ's.

He comes to Jerusalem to the feast with His mother and Joseph, and when it is over, and they go, He tarries behind. We are told, that to avoid confusion the men left the city by one gate, and the women by another; so Mary would think Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph would believe Him to be with Mary; and till they met outside the city, their loss would not be discovered. Oh, the bitterness of that three days' loss and search, foreshadowing another three days' loss, when He lay hidden in the tomb. What did Mary think? Was He gone for ever from her? Had He returned to His Father, and left the world, which did not want Him, unredeemed? Had she mistaken the date of Calvary, and had it come already, and should she find Him crucified by Herod? Was the Boy hanging even now upon the Cross? Or had He, like the Baptist, gone away to the desert to prepare for His life and death?

Let us remember, it is not merely a mother who has lost her child, but *the mother* that has lost *the Child*. The mother created so pure and exalted, who therefore could love and suffer beyond all human measure. The sword was piercing her heart. It was Calvary before its time for Mary. She seeks Him among kinsfolk and

acquaintances, ever hoping, ever disappointed ; the woe waxing deeper and more intense. She and Joseph toil back to Jerusalem with haste and painful steps ; she questions here and there ; she wanders all over the city, eagerly looking at each boy ; she inquires first of all likely persons, of all whom she knows ; then of any one, and every one ; some listen impatiently to her tale of woe, some ask questions ; but no one has seen such a Boy as she so eloquently describes with glowing tear-dewed eyes ; some give sympathy ; some advice ; some reproof ; some send her off with hope into a distant quarter. But three days pass, and He is not found.

Thus, and in similar ways, it is that those who are nearest and dearest to Jesus are made nearest to Him in suffering, made perfect through suffering. And more than this, there is a parable here of the soul's search for God. The painful, fruitless search of the world that had rejected God, the search of intellect and science, the old-world search, the search of human systems of religion. There is, too, the penitent's search for God, lost through sin ; the prodigal's return, the three days indicating the three parts of repentance. The mistakes, seeking Him among kinsfolk and acquaintance, in streets and houses and among passers-by, and by a thousand strange ways. How much is there here again to teach us, if we will but meditate upon it, and ponder it in our heart. But we must not linger over it now. Only let us notice the difference between the godly and the godless. Penitent and saint alike seek God with diligence, pains, and tears ; the worldly desire above all things to lose Him, to be separated from Him, to keep Him out of sight, out of mind. What a conversion is needed that a man may pass from one state to the other !



But what has Jesus been doing meanwhile? For three days He was a homeless, motherless Boy. Most likely He begged His scanty food, and slept in some chance shelter. The humble home and peasant's fare at Nazareth had become too luxurious for Him; He must taste the lot of the poorest; He must fathom the misery of the city's homeless miserables. There are words in the Psalms that tell of this, and other unrecorded humiliations. He haunts the Temple; He is present doubtless at all the services; He worships God, and His prayer goes up with the incense. Daily, when the doctors sit in the Temple porch to catechise and teach the children, He is there. He stands with the rest; He listens in silence, or modestly answers of His duty to God and man. More modestly He asks questions, "When will Messiah come? Where will He be born? Has not the sceptre now departed from Judah? Are not Daniel's seventy weeks accomplished?" He teaches by His questions; He has more understanding than His masters. Most likely some learned of Him; out of the mouth of babes learning wisdom. Joseph of Arimathea perhaps, and Nicodemus, sent back to Moses and the prophets; their hearts burning within them, as He, a child, questioned and brought heavenly light by His simple words.

So has it often happened since that children have taught grown men; so have teachers been taught by godly souls, that came to open their griefs and thoughts and wants to them, in all humility and earnestness asking for advice and guidance; little knowing that they were all the while teaching their teachers more than all books could teach.

There Jesus is found by Mary and Joseph; found in the House of God; found with God's appointed teachers,

ignorant, blinded, prejudiced, and worse, though they were. Is there no instruction here? Is it all chance and accident? Was this recorded, whilst so much was lost, for no important purpose? Surely the lesson is plain. They who would find God must seek Him in His Temple, and in the midst of those whom He has sent to teach in His name. The teacher may have stammering lips; he may even be a wicked Caiaphas, but being God's minister, he will prophecy, even when he knows it not, and be the minister of good to godly souls, though he himself be evil. Not in market or street or tavern, not in friend or book, but in God's House, is God most surely found by humble, earnest souls.

Mary sees and clasps Him in her arms, and leading Him away, asks why all this is? His mother, yet His creature; subject to Him, yet He subject to her. "Why is this?" in wonder and awe, not reproof. How often has this to be said to God of His dealings with us? If Mary, with her unapproachable gifts, understood not, how shall we understand God's ways? An unanswered "why," is so often all that remains to us. "Why this sorrow? Why this loss? Why blow after blow upon me, while others escape all? Why hast Thou thus dealt with me?" There is no answer as yet, but the echo; the unanswered "why." After all, what matters it, if we have Jesus with us, and we are going home with Him?

But now Jesus speaks; and let us remember that this is His first recorded utterance. Hitherto He has been silent to us, for none of His words before this have been preserved. The first words of the Word of God must be significant; here, too, there can be no chance. Whether we can find it or no, there must be fitness and deepest

significance. At least we notice that His first word and His last word are alike, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" This the beginning; and "It is finished," this the end. Obedience to God; obedience to man; these run through the Gospel record of the life of Christ. There is yet another word, the last word of the risen Christ, the last recorded word of the human life of the Word of God, "Follow Me." Is there not a whole Gospel in these three words? The life of Christ, and the life of the Christian, compressed into smallest compass; the following Christ in doing God's will and God's work in the world; what else have we to do? What else to learn? There is really nothing else. What am I here for? Why am I in the world? What have I to do? What shall shape my course? Surely my Father's business. I came not into the world by my own act and choice; I live moment by moment only by my Father's will; He has a reason for my existence. There is work to be done for Him, that I, and no one else, must do; for this all must be left, if occasion require, even father, mother, home, and life itself. This must come first, and then all else be made to fit in, as best it may.

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### WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

#### *Man Tempted through his Best.*

In the Mosaic account of the Fall, it is said that "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." The word here rendered "subtle" has not necessarily a bad

sense, and does not here seem to imply a malignant cunning, but rather intelligence and prudence. The same word is used in Proverbs, where our translation reads a "prudent man," and in the Septuagint the same sense is preserved. It would seem, then, that the serpent was the largest minded animal ; and it is remarkable that the same term is adopted by our Lord, where He says, " Be ye wise as serpents."

We see, then, this striking, terrible fact, that Satan can and does use the good and noble works of God as means of temptation to man. The creatures of God were good, yet Satan was permitted to make them instruments of evil ; and not only so, but he selects the best and choicest to effect his purposes. The serpent is the most intelligent of animals ; Satan makes it his agent to ruin mankind. Speech is the noblest gift of God ; Satan uses it to drag man down from his high estate. The desire of knowledge makes man great and honourable, the desire of knowledge is perverted to lead man to disobedience. Eve is God's last, best, choicest gift to Adam ; she is first seduced, and then she seduces him to fatal sin.

Here, then, is a strange and sad policy of the Evil One. Man is tempted through his best. Is it not so still ? Man's best must be given to God, or it will soon cease to be his own, and will become Satan's. History proves this. Noah, Job, Lot, and all the patriarchs, till we come to David and Solomon, all were victims of Satan's machinations. No sooner is Peter chosen to be the first of the Apostles, than he is made an agent to seduce our Lord, who turns upon him with the significant words, " Get thee behind me, Satan." It was Peter's mouth, but the words were Satan's ; he was still using the best and noblest for his evil ends.

When the Church began her work, it was the poor, the ignorant, the unknown, "the weak things of the world," that were her first conquest; but the work of Satan was with the great, the learned, the rich, who tried to stamp out the Church by persecution. By and by the Church won her way, and became great and wonderful. Then again the evil policy of the enemy appeared, and succeeded but too well. What terrible records there are of the evil doings of Christian Emperors, Kings, Bishops! "It is indeed a mystery of iniquity, that in the very heart of the Church, in her highest dignities, the evil principle has seated itself, and ruled."

If Satan claimed for himself the title of "Prince of this World," even in the presence of our Lord, and it was not denied, what wonder that he has so much power over the choicest gifts and powers of man? Does he not evidently handle them all, talents, eloquence, the pre-eminence that comes through education and high place, the imagination, the passions, and use them to turn man from God? The love of knowledge, science, commerce, wealth, invention, civilisation, are not these among man's best? yet Satan often turns them to man's deadly hurt. There are indeed low, grovelling, degrading vices, temptations to things shameful, mean, unmanly; but how many are there which are specially dangerous, just because they work upon that which is dearest and best, most honourable and most noble? The high spirit and restlessness of youth, the energy and perseverance of riper years, the powerful influence of woman, the instinct of self-preservation, the love of liberty, the passion for the beautiful, zeal for the truth, hatred of shams—how great, and good, and glorious are all these; and yet have they not, are they not prostituted, perverted to most evil purposes, made the specious,

seductive instruments to lure men to their ruin of body and soul?

We know that Satan tempts us through our lower appetites, let us remember that he also tempts us through our virtues, through our very best. He can transform himself into an angel of light. Are we moral? There is the temptation for us of pride, like that of the Pharisee, "God I thank Thee, I am not as other men are." Are we active in good works? Then comes the temptation to neglect personal religion, like Martha who could not stay to hear her Lord's golden words because of the bustle of her household cares. Have we the knowledge of God and of the way of salvation? We shall be tempted to sloth and security, like the Jews who said, "We are Abraham's seed," and yet knew not Christ, and put Him to death. So with all spiritual gifts; we shall be tempted through our best. Such temptations are most dangerous, because they are so subtle. We are lured from good by that which is good; we are led on to wrong, because we cannot see wrong in that which is itself right; we have no fear of evil, we hold our heads high in our delusions and perversities, because we feel that our motives are pure, our principles unimpeachable, our theory sound and worthy.

We read how one exclaimed in sad amazement at the evils done in the name of Liberty; may we not equally lament the mischief that is done in the name of almost all good things; none too good to be perverted; nay, the best most perverted, the highest, purest, holiest, made most mischievous, most foul, most fatal? *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

But this need not be. It was promised that the seed should bruise the serpent's head. Christ was tempted as Adam was tempted, yet in vain. He was manifested to

destroy the works of the devil; and He triumphed—Oh wondrous contrast!—by taking not the greatest and best, but the weakest and meanest things to be His instruments. And we may prevail in Him. St. Paul, with all his noble gifts and graces, gloried in his infirmities. It has been promised, “I give you power to tread upon serpents, and over all the power of the enemy.” Satan sometimes comes as a roaring lion, sometimes as a serpent, but the promise is ours, “Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.” We can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us; we may resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

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#### THURSDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

##### *The Family of God.*

We English especially cling to family ties; and it is well. There are European nations who have no word in their language like our word “Home,” and they suffer for it. For the family is the root of civilised life; it is the unit from which human progress and human happiness is reckoned; and above all, it is God’s method of man’s life in the world. We read that, at the beginning, when God pronounced all His work good, there was one exception. It was declared not to be good that man should be alone; and so the family was formed, and then God’s plan was complete.

Nor is this all. If we cast our eyes over the Bible record of God’s special dealings with man, we notice

one uniform method ; it is always with the family that God carries on His intercourse with man. Each crisis in revealed history ; each step in the spiritual annals of mankind, is marked by God's selection of a family, as the special medium of His providential dispensations. Probably there were races of men upon the earth before the time of Adam ; but with him began a new era, which had long been prepared for. Intellectual, spiritual man then began a life of conscious relationship to God, and that relationship was founded in the idea of the family. We turn on page after page of the sacred records till we come to another crisis in human history ; a terrible judgment sweeps away the rebellious people who had failed in their vocation, and a new beginning is made : but made once more in the old method ; the family of Noah inherits the position, duties, and responsibilities of the family of Adam. We read on again, till presently another epoch is discovered ; man has corrupted himself again ; God is forgotten ; truth is perverted ; the will of God is resisted ; His purpose seems to be frustrated by man's marvellous attribute of liberty, and his terrible tendency to evil. Then once more a new beginning is made. A family is selected, but what a strange family ! a family without children, and without prospect of children ; for Abraham and Sarah are old. God's purpose is being shadowed forth ; His superhuman power is being gradually manifested, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

We know all the strange eventful history of Abraham and his family. The Bible is made up with its details ; the story is by no means finished yet ; and as we go along, we notice the repetition of the fundamental idea from time to time, like the theme of a great piece of



music breaking out ever and anon, as the complicated wealth of ideas develops and grows; like the marvellous traits of family likeness, showing themselves, now in a single peculiar feature, now in a gesture, now in a habit, long after the founder of the family has disappeared from the world. Thus Jacob's family repeats much that we noticed in Abraham's family. But time goes on, and a new commencement is made; but still as always on the same principle, the principle of the family. Out of the family of Abraham and Jacob, a ruddy, guileless youth is selected, to found a family. Henceforth it will not be said, "Abraham and his seed," but "David and his seed."

Now a new element is evolved; further foreshadowings of the Divine purposes are seen. Abraham was rich and great, but landless and a wanderer. David is a king, and there are mysterious promises of world-wide dominion for his seed. But sad pages follow, dark hopeless records of degradation and disappointment. Once more God seems to be baffled by man's perversity. Man, who came from the dust, seems to have an irresistible proneness to degenerate, to fall earthwards, in spite of all Divine aids to raise him heavenwards. The family of Abraham, of Israel, of David, where is it now, when Rome has set her crushing foot upon the land of their inheritance? Where is the royal seed? Where the throne that shall be established for ever? Where is He in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed?

Time passes, but at last God's time comes. Guided by angel voices, we go to Bethlehem with simple shepherds, and with the wise and the great, we kneel and adore. But what do we see? A family; once more

a family ; always, in God's providence, a family ; husband, wife, and child. We can see now the meaning of God's mysterious ways ; we can see the one idea that runs through all His dealings with mankind. We see the reason of those dark typical foreshadowings, which show that the end was present in the mind of God from the beginning. Just as science finds the anticipations of man in all animal life, gradually developed, step by step ; so the Holy Family at Bethlehem is discerned by our eye enlightened by Gospel revelation, being prepared for in all those families that God set apart ages before, to fulfil His will.

Oh wondrous family, of which God Himself is a member ! Oh blessed family, in whom all families of the earth are blessed ! Oh glorious event, that brings glad tidings, "God with us ;" God made man ; God entering the family of mankind ; one family henceforth in heaven and earth ! God the universal Father, and we, not His creatures only, but His children.

See what comes of this ; that all mankind are brethren. Once the family was not only a bond of union, but a means of separation ; "love thy brother, hate thine enemy," that is every one else ; this was the old world theory. Union, support, sympathy, in the family, the tribe, the country ; but outside these all must be counted strangers, aliens, enemies. Christ comes to proclaim peace on earth, "Sirs, ye are brethren." Henceforth there shall be no nations, no geographical boundaries ; but one Father ; one faith ; universal brotherhood.

The Bethlehemites knew not that they were turning God from their doors : we see and know Him in the poor all around us ; we see Him in want of necessities, of

food, of clothing ; we see our Brother Jesus in need, we cannot shut up our compassion from Him.

A door has been opened in Heaven ; a door that cannot be shut. We regret no more the closed gate of the earthly Paradise, for a better Paradise is open to us. By that opened door the Son of God came forth ; by that He too returned ; the Man Jesus has returned, and after Him a multitude that no man can number ; all the family of God, all our brethren. Think of the blessed ones of all ages ; they reckon us their brothers and sisters. We shall see them, know them, and they will welcome us, as members of the same family, loved for the Father's sake, loved for the sake of our elder Brother Jesus, loved for our own sake.

Here we seem cut off from them, for they are not of our family ; but these temporary relationships are lost in the great family-bond of the children of God. In heaven there is no marriage ; we call no man father ; those whom we have known after the flesh, we know thus no more ; it is the spiritual brotherhood that outlasts death. We forsake father, mother, wife, children, and find them again as members of the family of God. Oh that vast family ; that multitude that no man can number ! We feel lost as we think of its hosts, rank upon rank, like a boundless sea ; but we need not so feel, if we remember the Fatherhood of God. Each one is not only known to Him, dear to Him, but the infinite powers of His love make each soul individually His ; not one is lost ; each nestles like the one darling in a mother's breast ; for from God came not only the father's but the mother's love ; all took its rise in Him ; all lives in Him ; all will be found by every child of

His eternally in Him. And oh, the dear departed ! we miss them ; their places are vacant ; vacant here ; but not vacant in the family of God. They have gone home. We say thankfully, " God with us ; " but theirs is a more perfect bliss, for they are " with God."

So let our happy family gatherings be made yet brighter, by the hope of better things to come. So let us sanctify earthly joys, earthly loves, by making them draw our souls upward to fadeless homes ; to that blessed family circle, which will never be broken ; to Jesus our most dear Brother, our Saviour ; to the great and glorious God, who is also our most loving Father, whose treasures of goodness no one has yet known, whose love no heart has yet imagined, whose embrace will heal all heart-aches, satisfy all longings, and give everlasting rest, and peace, and delight.

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## FRIDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

### *The Companions of the Crucified.*

The Gospel narrative tells us that about the Cross of Christ there stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and St. John. This little band forms a complete group, as distinct and separate as if there were no other spectators of the scene. All round and on distant eminences where a view could be obtained, there were doubtless crowds of Jews from all parts of the world, who had come up to keep the Passover, looking on at the death of Him who, they had been persuaded to believe, was an

unsuccessful adventurer, a detected impostor. In a privileged spot were the aristocracy of the city; Priests, Scribes, Pharisees, rejoicing that they were at length rid of a troublesome disturber of their peace. Hard by the Cross was the detachment of Roman soldiers on duty, rough, matter-of-fact men, hardened by the constant sight of pain, blood, and death; at the moment forgetting everything in the congenial excitement of dicing for the seamless coat. Each group is perfectly distinct from all the rest; each views the transaction in its own way, with little or no reference to the others.

Let us take our place with that group at the foot of the Cross; with them we sympathise, and with them alone; let us stand in spirit with them, as if there were no one else there but we. In this spirit some of the great religious painters have treated the Crucifixion. There hangs the bleeding, dying Christ; the thieves are there, and some soldiers; but the Mother, the Apostle, and the Marys, seem utterly unconscious of their presence; all their heart is absorbed in the one central object; they see, hear, think of, nothing else. Sometimes the devotional idea does even greater violence to the historical and realistic incidents. The Saviour hangs alone upon the Cross; the two thieves, the soldiers, the sneering Pharisees, the hooting mob, all are clean swept away by the painter; and this little band of which St. John tells us, stands solitary by the Cross; thus portraying by imaginary outward circumstances, what was really the inner thought and actual condition of those loving, suffering souls.

Can we not sometimes enter into this spirit of abstraction, in meditating upon the Crucifixion? Can we not place ourselves at the foot of the Cross, as if our

Lord were indeed crucified before our eyes ; as if we were at Calvary, and there alone ; as if He died in our presence, and for our sake alone. In proportion as we can enter into this thought, in the same proportion can we understand the mystery of the Crucifixion. If the whole thing is strange and unnatural to us, let us not at once thrust it away and depreciate it, as if it was mere fancy and exaggeration ; much less let us misjudge those who can feel what we cannot. Rather let us believe that there is some fault in ourselves ; that we are out of sympathy with this dreadful mystery, because we have never yet duly realised it ; never given time and thought and prayer to make it our own ; never cared enough about it, to cause it to become a subject of our heart's deep affections.

Turn we then to this little company of sympathisers with our Lord upon His Cross, and let us see who and what they are, that we may know whether we may indeed take our place with any of them. First, "there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother ;" that pure, wondrous being, whom God had sanctified and prepared to be the tabernacle in which the Son of God should dwell. That glorious creature of God, so pure, that her flesh and blood were taken by God to form His human body in which He lived and died, which, in its risen and glorified state He still inhabits, and will inhabit for all eternity ; which is the food of the souls of the faithful in all ages in the Holy Eucharist ; who nourished the Incarnate God at her breast, and carried Him in her arms. Her lot in all this was special and singular ; no other human being shared or can share any of this with her ; she stands, and must ever stand, quite alone.

But there are two points in which her lot and ours meet. Highly favoured as she was, she needed a Saviour; her heart, like ours, "rejoiced in God her Saviour." Far above us and all mankind as she was, she could not be saved otherwise than we, otherwise than the worst sinners are saved, by the Blood and the death of Christ. Then think we of her sorrow. The love of such a pure exalted being must have been inconceivably deep and intense; and now, when the sword pierced her heart, how inconceivably deep and intense must have been her sorrow, the sorrow of sympathy; sorrow for another's woe; sorrow fallen upon her by no fault of her own, but by the mysterious dispensation of God.

Here then, at least, we have common ground. Those bitter troubles that come upon some of us through the wounds and woes of others whom we love; those trials that we endure by the providence of God; these, let us remember, bring us near to the Cross, these put us into the company of the mournful mother, agonised with most cruel suffering, but saying now as at first, "Be it unto me according to Thy word."

Next to the Virgin Mother stands St. John; the only man of that little company; a pure virgin soul, full of love and of calm courage, vigorous, energetic in all his impulses, no half disciple he, no almost Christian. But his faith is sorely tried; he knows not what to believe. The arguments against his faith are so strong, so seemingly overwhelming and unanswerable. Yet he keeps fast by the Cross; he the only one of the twelve braving all risks. If his faith is crushed down, his love still stands firm; by this he holds on, like a ship at its anchor in a storm; and he is kept safely till brighter days come, and

his faith is once more strong and firm. Such an one finds his place beside the Cross ; and some in these days will be glad to take their places beside him.

The next companion of the Crucified is a far different character. Mary Magdalen, the woman that was a sinner ; who, from very aversion to God, had backed further and further away from Him, till she had fallen unawares over the edge of the precipice that separates this world from the doleful regions where evil ones who hate God and the light prowl and haunt, and they finding her there, had adopted her as one of themselves, and had taken up their abode in her body and soul. She, too, was by the Cross, clothed now and in her right mind, rescued, cleansed by the might and the love of her Lord. Let us sinners thank God for this. If she was welcome by the side of the Cross, there is room for us there, even the worst of us, if we repent as she repented. If we have not fallen so deeply as she had fallen, we shall still feel, many of us, that our place is with her rather than with the rest. "Sinners, of whom I am chief," this is the thought of every true penitent. We shall not weigh and balance degrees of guilt, if we feel our sins indeed. Only we shall be drawn irresistibly towards the Cross of our Saviour, and we shall take up our place unconsciously somewhere near Mary Magdalen, the sinner.

But there is yet one more who stands by the Cross : and of her we know nothing but just her name, "Mary the wife of Cleophas." Yet in this very fact of her obscurity there is a thought of hope and comfort for many a Christian soul. We are not pure like St. John ; we are not so deeply degraded as Magdalen ; we have had no great trials perhaps ; we are altogether ordinary people, in no way remarkable either for good or for evil. Here then



is our place, with this unknown Mary. They are few after all who make a noise in the world. We are known, most of us, to but a small circle. The world would go on, the Church would do her work very well without us. But each of us has a soul to be saved, some work to do. God cares for us; Christ died for us. Is not our place then near the Cross with Mary the wife of Cleophas, the unknown disciple of Jesus, whose life is unrecorded, whose good deeds and whose sins are known only to God; only her "name is written in the Book of Life?" "I am small and of no reputation, yet I do not forget Thy commandments; as for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord careth for me."

Such then are the companions of the Crucified: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." The same were found with Him at His Resurrection; the same are with Him now in His glory. Yes, and the same sort of persons are still drawn to the Cross; still keep close to it.

Let us think, each in his own heart, "Where is my place near the Cross? have I put myself there; there evermore to abide, till He bids me to go up higher?"

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## SATURDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY.

### *The Duty and Dignity of Work.*

We owe to Christianity a sense of not the duty only, but of the dignity and the religion of work. In this busy age, it is something for the earnest man to feel, that his work is not all so much loss and waste of time,

as regards his eternal interests, but that he is fulfilling his destiny, and not living his time unworthily, while he works day by day with head or hand. It is not that which is without, but that which comes from within, that defiles the man; for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" "It is He that giveth power to get wealth." The wise man says, "In all labour there is profit;" we see it to be truer even than he could think. Since the Son of God worked with head and hand as a carpenter, labour is sanctified. The curse of the first Adam was, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;" the second Adam removed the curse, and blessed the labour of our hands. Yes, removed the curse; for labour is not cursed in itself; labour was not created by the Fall; labour was not itself man's punishment; for labour existed before the Fall, "the man was set in the garden, to dress it, and to keep it." All things are full of labour; heaven above is full of angels fulfilling the duties set them; all creation is busy; labour is not a curse; but to labour without God, without hope, without the power to please God; this is a curse indeed.

"The law of nature is, that a certain quantity of work is necessary to produce a certain quantity of good; to avoid work then is to lose some good thing that work would give us, and so to degrade ourselves. To covet, and seek to get good without work, is to play the tyrant or the robber, and to make others miserable and degraded, that we may have their share of good." Man is not degraded by labour. The poet's words gain new truth and new power when we think of the Son of God, and His deliberate choice of manual labour as His lot in life—

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Like us Thou wast a toiling man,  
And we are noble now.

Labour need not separate us from God, and make us worldly-minded ; we may take our daily tasks as the angels take theirs, direct from God's Hand, and do all to the glory of God. Let us only say to ourselves, day by day and hour by hour, whatever we have to do in our worldly calling, "This is God's will, this is God's work for me to do ; this is my Father's business ; I must not be slothful in it ;" and we shall do it cheerfully, heartily, thoroughly, as the servants of God ; we shall come to the rest and worship of the Lord's day with a clear conscience, with a zest, and a gladness, that the sordid, the selfish, and the idle, never know. It is the idle that become sensual, immoral, and withal craving, dissatisfied, and morbid. The busy man has not time for these things, "he eats his bread with gladness and singleness of heart ;" time is not a weariness ; life is full of aims, full of satisfactions ; "he carries music in his heart." "My experience has taught me that there is not any necessary connection between a life of toil and a life of wretchedness." Such was the testimony of one who had laboured as a common stone-mason, till his industry and talents raised him in social position.

What is it that has made England the mighty empire that she is ? Has it been war and conquest, the ambition and power of any man ? Has it been accident, or the concurrence of favourable circumstances ? Nay, but it has been through the patient industry of her people. It has been by work ; work of head, and work of hand. The work, not of some one great man, but the work of many industrious men.

St. Paul exhorts us to be, "not slothful in business."

The word translated "business," means, anything that requires care, pains, expedition. It is a precept for all ; that we be not slothful in daily duties to God, to man, and to ourselves, which are all alike appointed for us by God, and for the performance of which there is but a short time given us. "Idleness will clothe a man with rags." It is true of this life ; let us be sure it is true of the life to come. The man who has not "used diligence to make his calling and election sure," shall be found clothed with the filthy rags of his own unrighteousness at the great wedding-feast, and shall be cast into outer darkness. The unprofitable servant, who has not used and improved his Lord's talents by trading, will be cast into prison as a debtor and a felon. Doing no harm is not our vocation, but doing good. Mere indolent harmlessness is criminal, in those whose calling is to work, to fight, to run the race set before them. The fig-tree was cursed, not because it bore poisonous fruit or thorns, but because it bore no figs. He who thus dealt with it, will judge us all at the last great day ; so will it be fulfilled, "one shall be taken, another left ;" two have lived side by side, with the same advantages, the same occupation, the same estimation among men, but God trieth the reins, searcheth the hearts, and weigheth the actions of men ; and that day will see strange separations, strange unions.

Of all the sins of the Seven Churches of Asia, that which calls forth the most bitter rebuke is the want of earnestness and energy of Laodicea ; the very same word being used as in St. Paul's words, "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit." Let each man ask himself, "What is my business ? What has God sent me into the world to do ? What can I do ? What am I doing ?

Am I slothful?" There is plenty of work to be done; work for ourselves; to make ourselves nobler, better, wiser, more useful; to make ourselves ready for higher duties in a higher life, of which this life is but the threshold; work for our fellow-men; works of mercy, of duty, of justice; work for God in His Church, in His people, in our own hearts. And this is our comfort, that "God is not unrighteous, that He will forget our work and labour."

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## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

### *The Magnificence and Perpetual Example of the Faith of Abraham.*

In a loaded cannon the chemical energies of the gunpowder are in such a delicate condition of equipoise, that a spark changes in an instant the state of rest into one of most violent action. Something like this seems to occur from time to time in the history of mankind. Every now and then a man appears whose energies are so far above those of the ordinary average of his race that he inaugurates a new era in the history of the world. George Stephenson was such a man with his steam-engine. Newton was such a man with his physical discoveries. Napoleon had this gift, and misused it to the world's woe. Mahomet had a similar power, and used it on the whole in a similar way. The united efforts of thousands of ordinary men would never have accomplished that which these men were able to effect by their single powers. The instrument is prepared, the time for its

use arrives, the necessary impulse is given, and at once the effect is seen, and the world is never again what it was before.

Such a man was Abraham. Like most of those men who have left their mark upon the world's history, he rises out of obscurity into everlasting memory. He had been secretly fashioned for his destiny in the midst of ordinary men, dwelling on the plains in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates ; and suddenly a divine call singles him out, and he enters upon a course of training that is to fit him for his peculiar and noble vocation.

Idolatry seems to be an instinct in the undeveloped human mind. It springs up spontaneously, like some rank weed in an uncultivated garden. There is a craving for some visible object of worship, a compelling longing for a mediator between the distant invisible God and suffering humanity with its present urgent wants. There is an irresistible tendency to attribute conscious action to the powers of nature, and to propitiate the favour of spiritual beings, who are supposed to act unseen beneath these appearances. It is difficult for us to understand fully these feelings, and to appreciate at its due value Abraham's mighty spirit that not only raised him above all this, but enabled him to keep himself from being carried away by the force of universal custom and opinion.

We can best understand Abraham's greatness by comparing it with the magnificent, indomitable persistence of other great men who were alone in their day with some grand secret. Thus we know what Galileo had to endure because he was before and above the men of his time in physical knowledge and discovery ; we remember how Stephenson, like a mother, travailed in painful and long-continued pangs, till the child of his brain was formed

little by little, and finally was brought forth a helpless, unwelcome stranger into an unsympathetic world ; we read how Palissy, and other less well-known inventors, endured a long martyrdom before they persuaded the world that they had some new truth to tell it. Reformers have had an equal, or even a greater, difficulty in prevailing upon men to give up abuses and to return to the half-forgotten and discredited truth. It seems clear enough when the conflict becomes matter of history, but at the time that the battle is at its height, it is hard and therefore meritorious to discern the right and to contend for it against odds and despite all discouragements. Those know best something of what this is who, in an undertaking small and local and unimportant though it may have been, have had to meet apathy and prejudice, and mere stupid "doing as they have always done," and "as their fathers did before them," and "as everybody does," and have had no weapon wherewith to combat all this, but their own unalterable conviction, their firm will, and a manly determination not to be beaten from their purpose by difficulties and impediments.

But even all this does not wholly represent to us the grandeur of Abraham's character. The majority of men live in and are satisfied with the present. Abraham realised and was mightily influenced by the future. He sacrificed the present on account of the future. He left home and friends ; he gave up comfort and all that makes life pleasant, to wander whither he knew not, in obedience to a command and through faith in a promise.

Here, as before, we may better understand him if we notice how the same spirit works out almost all that is worth having in the world. The idle and sensual live languidly and indulgently in the little enjoyments of the

moment ; the men who succeed in life labour and toil, and so gain eminence and nobility. The vine that is laden with clusters at vintage-time, was ruthlessly cut and pruned in the winter. The prosperous merchant, the influential statesman, is the man who can gaze forward and read the future ; holding in his hands the chain of circumstances, he can feel the vibrations of coming events which are as yet unrevealed, but which are indissolubly connected with the things of the present. Our Lord tells us that Abraham saw His day. God's original promise of a Redeemer of the human race had become obscured and forgotten in the enjoyment of the good things that still remained, when man's estate was wrecked and ruined. Perhaps Nimrod persuaded men that he was the coming man, the promised Saviour, and offered, in return for supreme power, to right all the wrongs of mankind. The city which he built should be that which the primeval promise had indicated, and he would make this world so good and happy that men should not need to gaze onward, and to hope for any other lord, for any other life to come. It is a trap that seems always to catch men. It is still set, and is still quite successful. The candidate that makes the largest promises will get the votes of the multitude. They know nothing of history ; they never learn by the experience of others. In all ages of the world there have been Absaloms with their secret caresses and their bountiful future benefits, stealing away poor, suffering men's hearts. "Here," say they, "is a true benefactor at last ; this is our man ; up with him ; down with the old blunderers and tyrants ; our troubles and miseries are all their fault. This man is our true friend ; he shall have power, and he will give us in return all we want."



But Abraham was not deluded by this popular outcry. He left his home and became a wanderer. He forsook the great city that was being built with blood and tears, and "looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He "put not his trust in princes nor in any child of man," but by magnificent faith discerned afar off the reign of the "Prince of Peace," "whose kingdom shall have no end." His pure soul revolted from the adoration of idols, the deifying of created things, and looking straight up to the Eternal, he would bow the knee to none other, to none lower. Well may he be called the "Father of the Faithful." Well may he have been chosen as the channel of God's promises to the human race, the pattern man whose example should be paramount till Christ Himself came; and after Him for all time still the pattern to all men in those things where Christ was too high to be imitated. St. Paul insists upon this over and over again. To his Gentile converts at Rome, in Galatia, and elsewhere, he points out Abraham's faith as the Christian's guide in life. He will not allow the Jews to monopolise Abraham; to Gentile Christians he says of him, he is "the father of us all," "he is the father of all them that believe though they be not circumcised;" and he takes care to show that Abraham's faith, that made him what he was, was his before he was circumcised, before he became the father of the Jewish people, the depository of the special promises of his lineal descendants. He calls him "the heir of the world," not the progenitor of a single people, the possessors of a small country in a corner of the earth.

It was a difficult truth for a Jew to learn; he had a great deal to unlearn before there was room for it in his soul narrowed by mean and perverted traditions. The

prophets indeed are full of it, but there was a veil upon the hearts of the readers. Peter's intercourse with his Lord even does not seem to have made it clear to him; it was not till after Pentecost that the great and glorious truth dawned upon him, and wholly took possession of his soul; and then he and his fellow-Apostles went out into the wide world ready to call every man brother who had the faith of our father Abraham, and by it was justified and saved.

All great men, all great benefactors of the human race, all leaders of men, have been men of faith. "Upon faith every civilisation has been based, and in proportion as such faith has been weakened has every civilisation tottered to its fall. Regarding history as a whole, the part of reason must be admitted to have been a secondary one. It is faith that has grasped whole nations and ages within its sway, and which has determined the main principles of their conduct and their destiny."

Reason raises man above the brutes, but faith raises him above this world into a higher sphere. Reason is occupied with things as they are; faith is for reform, progress, something higher, better, nobler. This is the weak point of a scientific age; it is occupied and satisfied with the present; it is absorbed in itself; while the hero, the philanthropist, the martyr, the apostle, is a man of faith. Abraham's example is never out of date; it seems to be growing in value and importance as the ages pass on. Abraham was not, like Noah and the prophets, and Jesus, and St. Paul, a preacher; he was a silent example of man's highest and noblest way of life in the world. Man is such a creature of habit and imitation that it requires heroic faith to stand alone and yet stand firm like Abdiel,

## Faithful found

Among the faithless, faithful only he ;  
Among innumerable false, unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal ;  
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought  
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,  
Though single.

There never was a time when Abraham's principle of conduct was more needed to be kept before men's eyes than in our own day. They tell us that "world springs out of world in never-ending cycle, and that there is no sign of a creation to be found. At last the little automaton stands forth and disowns his Maker, a strange sight indeed ! The clay pot which has just been fashioned mocks at the notion of a potter, and falls to worshipping the wheel."

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ?" Life goes so quickly, and is so uncertain, that men grasp at the present moment, and will not wait for, will not trust themselves to the future. Cold reason is questioning the existence of the unseen and the intangible ; the feelings, the affections, the spiritual impulses of man's soul are being depreciated. We are told that we are only machines, guided by necessity, crushed by the paramount forces of nature, that our aspirations are mere physical impulses, and that our boasted free-will is a delusion. If this be true, then farewell to man's greatness and to the world's progress. The scientist may indulge such dreams in his study, living in the security of a civilisation which a system of faith has built up ; but preach this new gospel to mankind at large, and then see the result. Destroy men's faith, and there will soon be a universal reign of mere destruction.

Tell the multitude that there is no God, no future life, no soul, no heaven nor hell, no future judgment where good will be rewarded and evil punished, and what will there be to restrain the animal passions, the selfish cruelty, that still lurk in the heart of the best of men, and which even now, with all the restraints of centuries of Christian civilisation, is constantly bursting out into acts of hideous and appalling atrocity? They tell us it all comes by direct descent from our bestial ancestors; well then, that old-world time of beast-life will be restored again; beasts in human form will raven and wallow, and slay, and be slain, and there will be never a man in the image of God to have dominion over them and hold them in check. They tell us that they are compelled to what they believe and deny, by incontrovertible facts, that they love truth, and must pursue it at all risks; but surely these consequences show that there must be some terrible error, some misreading of facts; that a bye-lane has been followed because it seemed to be leading in the right direction, when in truth it ends only in pitfalls and quagmires through which there is no way at all.

Oh, let us cling to faith, cherish, cultivate faith! It is faith that makes us men. The animals have passions as we have; they have more or less of reasoning power, but they have no faith, they never look up to God, they never worship, never pray; they have no thought of a future life, no aspirations for a nobler, purer, more spiritual existence. These we have; without them should not we too indeed be but animals?

Oh, be our lot with Abraham and all that godly succession of worthies who have lived and died in faith! Faith is as truly a part of our nature as our

passions are. Let faith grow and reign, and let the passions be subdued.

Arise, and fly  
The reeling faun, the sensual feast ;  
Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die.

Yes, faith overcomes ; faith saves ; faith is man's glory in this life, and it leads him on to a nobler life yet to be revealed. Why do men fail in life ? Why are they mean, degraded, ignoble ? Is it not for want of faith ? Faith ever sees God, sees the consequences of sin, sees the blessedness of obedience and self-sacrifice. Faith pierces through the thin disguises that make vile things seem fair, lies truth, ugliness beauty. Faith sustains men in the conflict with wrong, in weariness, in neglect, in hard circumstances. Faith makes men brave and patient, manful and daring. Faith is the soul's shield in life, its anchor at death. Let us pray ever, "Lord, increase our faith." By faith we are saved, saved now from degradation and ruin ; saved hereafter, when faith receives its crown, and finds itself transformed into unending, unchanging love at sight of Him in whom it has believed, in whose presence His creatures find rest at last and fulness of joy for evermore.

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## MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

### *The Reasonableness and the Method of Prayer.*

Our Lord's first miracle at Cana contains much instruction. There is not only the direct and obvious

teaching of the miracle itself, but there are several truths that lie a little beneath the surface, or a little beside the main line of the narrative, and so may be easily overlooked, but which are scarcely less important than the primary lesson of the incident itself.

The relation between our Lord and His mother was not merely a remarkable one, but it was one that was entirely unique. No other human being ever did, or ever could, occupy that special position which was the lot of Mary. And this not merely from the physical fact that she was His mother, but because that fact involved many consequences. She must have known Him better than any other human being ever did or could know Him. For more than thirty years she had been with Him constantly in the closest and most intimate companionship. The tenderest love, a mother's instinct, a woman's natural power of forming a judgment by observation, and above all her own marvellous endowments of grace from on high; all these must have made Mary able to read our Lord like an open book, able to find in Him a true revelation of God. We ought then to learn from her many lessons. The little that is told us of her makes us value that little all the more, and scrutinise it with earnest care, with the sure conviction that it has been preserved to us for some special reason, and that a rich vein of precious truth must be contained in these few recorded incidents.

From the share she had in the first miracle at Cana, let us learn then how to pray. During those long years at Nazareth, Mary must have many times come to our Lord in all sorts of difficulties and necessities. All authorities agree that Joseph had now been dead for some years; Mary then would depend upon our Lord for

everything. It seems to be implied in St. John's words that He had never yet exercised miraculous power, but Mary had over and over again experienced His wisdom and ability to provide for all contingencies, and had been accustomed to trust everything absolutely to His care and providence. It is new to us, but it was doubtless but one instance out of multitudes, when we see her coming to our Lord with an unexpressed prayer, "They have no wine." She simply told Him her trouble, and left it in His hands; she asked nothing, suggested nothing; she only said that there was a want, and then with perfect trust, with silent, patient, respectful hope, she felt that her part was done, and that what was best would come.

There is something very touching in this. It is like the confiding, helpless appeal of poor dumb animals. We know how they will sometimes come wounded, or sick, or hungry, and with mute pleading eyes look up to us as superior beings with all sorts of unintelligible powers, and lay themselves down before us, to be done with as we will. Or, to go a step higher, it is like the instinct of the little child that comes wailing its heart out, and buries its tear-dabbled face in its mother's bosom, expecting not only her help, but that she will find out the little trouble that the sobs prevent the telling of. Mary's experience, Mary's grace, had taught her to pray like this; let us go and do likewise; for

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye  
When none but God is near."

Our Lord in His teaching about prayer distinctly gives

us the same rule. He will have no vain repetitions. He reminds us that our Father knows that we have need of these things even before we ask, and bids us trust Him who feeds the dumb beasts who seek their meat from God. The disciples had learned something of this way of bringing troubles and wants before their Lord. Thus, they said of Lazarus, "Behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick;" and though Jesus abode still in Galilee, they seem to have said no more, but to have left the matter patiently and trustfully in His hands. As if He had said—

"Tell him that his very longing is itself an answering cry,  
That his prayer, 'Come, O gracious God,' is my answer,  
'Here am I.'

Every inmost aspiration is God's angel undefiled,  
And in every, 'O my Father,' slumbers deeply, 'Here, my  
child.'"

The silent appeal of our weakness to the pity of the Almighty is more eloquent than any words. To come before Him, and show Him ourselves with all our wants as He sees them, "with no language but a cry," is the most powerful prayer, the prayer of the creature to the Creator. So Nineveh prayed, king, people, babes, cattle, and the silent prayer was heard. The tale of woe spread out before God, like Sennacherib's letter to Hezekiah. By contrast we see the force of this, when we hear the urgency of the nobleman who would not trust our Lord, but after He had undertaken the matter, cried impatiently to Him, "Sir, come down, ere my child die."

What shall we say, then, of those who would persuade us that our Heavenly Father cannot do what the loving earthly father does? That the Creator cannot do for us



what we can do for our fellow-creatures? That love and trust may regulate our relations with one another, but that inexorable laws tie the hands of the Almighty, and make it useless for us to pray to Him? They say, "Do you expect God to perform a miracle for your benefit?" We reply, "Why not? It is as much a miracle for God to pardon our sin, to give us the grace of patience, or self-denial, as it would be if He healed our sickness." They say, "Your prayer asks God to alter the order of His providence, as if that order were wrong, as if He had made a mistake, or overlooked something; and that implies that He is not Almighty or Omniscient." But is it not probable that He has powers which cannot be transferred to any system of matter? Man can construct machines that will do wonderful things, but no machine will express all man's powers, his intellect, his affections. Why should we not believe, in like manner, that created matter, notwithstanding all its marvellous laws and powers, should still be unable to express all the mind of the infinite God, and that He should leave Himself free, as we are free, to be influenced by prayer, as special circumstances arise? We must judge of God by ourselves who are made in His image; and the coming of the Son of God in the flesh justifies us in this, as He Himself distinctly says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" not indeed all the mysteries and attributes of the Godhead, that is impossible, but as much as human nature can receive and express, as much as the human mind can understand. We are sure that vice and virtue, truth and love and purity, must look the same to God as they do to us; we may then, and we must judge of the mind and will and affections of God, as we judge of our own, and believe that when He teaches us to call Him Father, it

is because there are in Him in their perfection those admirable attributes which cluster round our ideal expressed by that word "father."

Next see how our Lord seemed to refuse His mother's prayer. He appears to have been speaking to Himself rather than to her in His answer. His "hour" that He mentions had reference here and elsewhere to His Death and Passion, the terrible end of that manifestation of His power and goodness which He knew was now to be begun. This was in His mind, as ever, and all things were seen in its light. It is probable that Mary did not fully understand His meaning, and that she took it to be that the time had not quite come for granting her request.

So it is very often with us. We think we are being refused, when we are merely wrongly interpreting God's dealings with us. "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." A child may come wounded to its mother, and may be rendered broken-hearted, because she thrusts it aside, and runs out of the room; she seems cruel, turning her back upon the little sufferer, and leaving it in its pain of body and sharper pain of heart; but what if she has but rushed into another room to find the necessary remedy, with truest wisdom, with deepest love, hastening to bring what will cure the trouble? Shall not we, who think we have often prayed in vain, see and know some day why there was delay; why our prayers seemed to be unheard, unanswered?

See, then, how we must act now when there is no present answer to our prayers. See Mary's patience, trust, hope. She did not fall to weeping, or complaining, or arguing, or urging her petition impatiently.

She said nothing more to our Lord ; but to the servants she said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." She had no idea what He would do, but she made ready for anything. This is greater faith even than that which our Lord commended in the poor diseased woman, or the Syrophenician mother, or the paralytic. Their faith was great, but it was shown by persevering prayer, by efforts that no difficulties could stop, by dogged courage, that almost seemed obstinacy. But Mary chose a better part, displayed higher faith, greater grace.

"After this manner therefore pray ye." Like Mary, if we can ; but it is not easy ; such heights of faith and trust are not reached by ordinary Christians. And if we cannot pray as she did, then let us pray like those others whom our Lord commended, and whose prayers He answered. But anyhow, let us never cease to pray ; let none rob us of that privilege, that consolation, by any arguments, any sophistries. Hard logic finds difficulties and contradictions in the theory of prayer ; faith and instinct teach us, compel us to pray. The reasoning faculty of the *man* says, "Prayer is either unnecessary or useless when addressed to an all-knowing Deity by creatures who are parts of an unalterable system ;" but the *womanly* instinct with unreasoning conviction says, "I will ; I must ; despite your arguments, I know I am right." Does not the whole truth lie in the union of these two instincts ? Is not the perfect man made up of the qualities of the two sexes together ? Is not the spirit sexless, as God is sexless ? and is not the spiritual man endowed with all Divine qualities that are shadowed forth at present in this temporary condition, partly in man, partly in woman, partly in the child ? The angels have no sex, the glorified saints are like them, the

perfect man Jesus Christ combined in His nature all human gifts and graces which are ordinarily divided between the sexes. All in Him is proportionate, the even balance is maintained, opposites qualifying one another, opposites glorifying one another, and producing an harmonious new condition.

“Father to me thou art, and mother dear,  
And brother too, kind husband of my heart ;  
So evermore by faith’s undying glow,  
We own the Crucified in weal and woe.”

We trace many feminine traits in the character of Jesus : yet He is not less a man ; He is never effeminate. God made man in His own image, male and female ; all masculine and feminine graces and qualities must have their fountain-head in God. All lie within the circle of human power ; the feminine latent in man, the masculine in the woman. We know this, because circumstances sometimes bring out these hidden qualities. Men display the tender attributes of woman, women rise to manly condition compelled by overmastering force.

Let us listen to and trust our reason, for it is God’s gift ; but let us also respect and give due weight to our feelings and instincts, for they too are the gift of God to us. Reason sometimes misleads us ; feeling sometimes misleads us ; the wise man corrects the one by the other, just as the experienced captain will not trust his ship to one compass or to one chronometer, but will check one by a second, and so be safe in the mean between the two. Cold reasoning, a hard and fast line, drawn by facts and figures, reduces man to a machine, and his creed to naked materialism ; but the materialist can unbend to his children, be tender to those whom he loves, be pitiful to the suffering ; he can weep or smile ;

he can beg and hope ; in spite of his theories, he shows himself to be a man and not an automaton.

In the present day, physical science is, as it were, "in the air ;" the tendency of thought is to deify law, and to put nature in the place of God ; to believe only in materialism and fatalism, to rob man of his faith and hope ; to take away his soul, and bring him down to the level of the brutes, that live without prayer, and die without hope of immortality. God has revealed Himself to us by His Son, that loving, gentle, self-sacrificing Being whom even those who deny His divinity cannot help wondering after and admiring, and those who believe in Him and follow Him are transformed into His likeness, and are made living disproofs of every system of doubt and denial.

Yes, let our faith save us ; save us from the misery of degrading, despairing thoughts about God and ourselves ; save us from the misleading bias of our unaided intellect, which is so limited, so easily deceived ; save us from going through life with our eyes prone upon the ground like the beasts ; make us walk upright like men, ever looking upward, ever reaching through the mists and obscurity of this world to our bright home with our Father, ever conscious of the eye of God, ever saying in heart and life, even when our lips are silent, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

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## TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

*Sitting Still.*

St. Mark tells us that before our Lord fed the multitude by miracle, the people were arranged in companies of fifty or a hundred. Order is heaven's first law. Before God gives men a blessing, He requires them to be prepared for it. Five thousand men, besides women and children, if left to themselves, would be a disorderly mob; but sitting quietly in companies, all confusion would be prevented, and each individual would be accessible. We cannot understand how our Lord multiplied the loaves, but we can understand why He reduced that seething crowd to order, before He gave them the food they so much needed.

But is there not something more in this incident; some universal and perpetual instruction, for the sake of which this detail has been recorded, and handed on for so many generations? Our Lord commented on His own miracle, and deduced spiritual lessons from it. He declared that He Himself is the Bread of Life, and that men must receive Him if they would live now and eternally. Would He not have us understand that the antecedent circumstances of that eating of the multiplied bread, have also their parallel in the due preparation for receiving that Bread which came down from heaven, *i.e.*, our Lord Himself? If He demanded order, preparation, expectation, before the material food was passed from His hands to those of the hungry men, is it not reasonable to suppose that similar order, preparation, and expectation must be found before He will communicate His spiritual

presence to the souls of men? Nor should we confine our thoughts merely to the receiving of the Holy Communion, but to that larger, wider gift of communion with God, which is the privilege and the highest joy of all His reasonable creatures. Evidently there must be hunger; evidently there must be supernatural interference; but let these pass just now, and let us notice this submission to that arbitrary requirement of the great Giver, as to the previous attitude of those whom He wills to feed.

Our Lord said, "Make the men sit down." Does the Master still say this to His apostles and ministers, as their part of the great work which He purposes to do in and for the souls of men? Look out upon the world of to-day, and see how little it knows of Christ; how little it has evidently received of Christ; how little it has assimilated the received Bread that came down from heaven. Natural bread is incorporated into the man who eats it, and turned into flesh and blood; but he who eats of that Bread that came down from heaven is transformed by what he eats. He is made like Christ. Christ is seen, heard, known in him, and by him. There are so many copies of Christ, walking, speaking, working; some more, some less like Him; some like Him in one feature, some in another: just as we see the father's likeness in a large family of children, but so variously displayed.

Now do we not look in vain for the traces of the features, the manners of Christ, in many in this Christian land? And what do we say to ourselves? These have not eaten of that Bread that transforms men who eat it; or they have eaten too sparingly; or they have eaten unpreparedly; or they have not the healthy power of assimilation. And then we ask again, how and why is this? There are many answers, many

reasons ; but surely there is one answer, one reason that will explain this want of Christ's likeness in many. ' Is it not this? Their lives are too busy, too hurried, too anxious ; their spirits never rest ; they are always moving, always eager for change, always impatient. In this restless nineteenth century, the Master is standing with His Hands filled with blessing, and all round there is a pushing, chaotic mob, hungry, faint, weary, yet unable to find what it wants, and we may almost hear His voice, like a sigh, saying to His appointed ministers, " Make the men sit down."

Many things are wanting for the healing of the ills of mankind, but this certainly is needed, that men be quiet and orderly ; that they cease sometimes from the toils, and cares, and bustle of common daily life, and sit down like Mary at the Master's feet to hear His words ; for " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The Word of God and the Bread of Life are the same.

Long ago the remonstrance was published, " Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" but to-day it is tenfold more needed. Haste seems to be exalted into the place of the highest good. It seems to be esteemed scarcely as a means, but itself an end. Progress means speed and restlessness ; and civilisation, that " men have neither time to live, nor time to die." Life goes faster and faster, and men are so delighted with all this hurry, that they do not stop to ask whether they and the world are any the happier, any the better for it all.

What wonder, then, that the Master's messengers are disregarded? They come out in their Master's name, and call men to order and rest ; but the reply is, " We



have no time for it." Sunday every week ; Christian seasons year by year ; calls to prayer, to thought, to self-questioning, "What am I?" "Whence do I come?" "Whither am I going?" "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Sit down," says the Church, "for a few moments, and think of these things." But they will not ; and so they sicken with emptiness, and faint by the way-side for very hunger and weariness. And those behind, push on still, and trample upon the fallen ; till they themselves fall in their turn, and their poor foolish lives are done.

The world has seen many forms of ungodliness, but none stranger than this nineteenth century phase of it, "We have no time to attend to God and His words." There are indeed unbelievers, who have lost faith in God and Christianity, but while the majority of people believe, they thrust aside religion, or postpone its practice ; and so they get used to doing without it ; and a habit of passive irreligion is formed, which as life goes on becomes fixed, and hopelessly unalterable.

In everything else men sit down sometimes, and think. The merchant and the manufacturer take stock, and balance their accounts. The inventor sits down, and draws schemes and plans. The statesman sits down, and reviews the situation and prospect of his country's affairs. No one supposes these intervals are time wasted ; nay, they are the hours that make the busy and active hours that follow useful and profitable. Shall it be only in a man's relation to God, that he never sits down, and thinks, plans, recapitulates? Sunday, and such times as this season of Lent, are given us that we may sit down, wait, pause, think, and receive a blessing from God.

Sometimes God takes the matter into His own hands, and sickness takes us away from the world's bustle, and puts us into an attitude of fitness for intercourse with God. It is a poor excuse for keeping away from church, that profit does not evidently and immediately come of it. For why do we go to church? Is it to be excited, interested, pleased? Nay, is there not one, among the many results of church-going, that is very commonly missed, just because people ignorantly do not expect it? Is it not just coming into the presence of God, our Heavenly Father, showing ourselves to Him, silently, it may be, that He may see what we need; that He may send us something that we want; "sitting down," till He gives us our portion of the Bread of Life? There are, indeed, better things than this, but even coming to God's presence on these terms is better than staying away altogether; like horse and mule that have no understanding. It is something merely to get away from the world's voices and influences for a little time, into a place where God is the first thought. It is as good for us spiritually, as a mere change of air is for our body's health. It is he that asketh that receiveth. We must at least put ourselves into the attitude of petitioners to God; we must get into the line of the stream of His blessings. There is a time for everything; a time to work hard and with all our might at our worldly calling; a time to work hard for God and His Church, and for our own salvation; but there is also a time when it is our one duty to sit down quietly and patiently; for that is God's working time, and we must just sit still, and do nothing, but thankfully receive what He sends us.

## WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

*Jesus the Citizen.*

Capernaum is spoken of by St. Matthew as our Lord's "own city." These, and other similar words in the Gospels, have become so familiar to us, that we cannot, without an effort, realise the vast and strange truth they contain. "His own city;" so there really was a place that once owned Jesus as one of its citizens! Bethlehem was the place of His birth, Nazareth witnessed His youth, His apprenticeship to Joseph, His daily subjection, His learning a trade, His growth in stature and knowledge; and then when He was of full age, when His ministerial life had begun, Capernaum was "His own city." There was His home; there it was that, like the prophets, He was so familiarly known, that He was without honour.

But we must put it more plainly yet; we must enter into some detail to fix the thoughts, before we can quite realise what all this actually means and involves. There was then in Capernaum a street and a house, where Jesus lived with His widowed mother; there He ate, and drank, and slept, there He met His fellow-townsmen, and was known and recognised as "Jesus the Son of Joseph the carpenter;" there He was but a poor Jew, who paid His taxes, bought the necessities of life, and had His name down upon the census roll. He would be talked about by neighbours, like any one else; some would think He would do better if He kept quietly to His trade, and supported His mother, instead of wandering away from time to time to preach, and to meddle with the affairs of His betters. Some would consult His mother about

marriage, and would wish that one of their daughters might become His wife; some would ask His assistance as a neighbour, when a hand was wanted for this or for that. When He went out, He would bow His head to the elders of His city, whom He met in the street, and stop to speak to relations and friends. At home there would be the common household furniture and domestic utensils that He daily used, His bed, His clothes, the place where He sat, the tools of His trade. If He wanted to cross the lake, He must go, like any one else, in a boat; He would ask the fishermen to give Him a passage, being too poor to pay for it; and He would sit among the rest, and they would talk, and do the work of the boat, just as usual. Three times a year he would go up to Jerusalem, like other men walking there and back again, with others going the same way. The sun would beat hot and scorching upon His head, as upon any other man's; the wind would bluster about Him; the rain would wet Him to the skin; the cold would bite. He was to His neighbours a very ordinary person; and when, by-and-bye, it was reported that He had shown Himself something more in His journeyings elsewhere, and that there had been signs and wonders wrought by Him, they were incredulous, and with curiosity or a sneer, required that He should do among them of His own city the miracles He was said to have performed in distant towns.

And yet this very ordinary person, this poor widow's Son, this unknown citizen of Capernaum, this "Jesus, Son of Joseph," was God Himself! His will sustained the world upon which He walked, just as His word had long ago created it. The sun rose and set by His laws; the rain fell and corn and grapes ripened by His power

and ordinance. When in the synagogue prayer went up, and He was but one of the congregation, those prayers were received by Him, and the answer was in His hands alone. When sickness, or death, or birth happened in any of those houses at Capernaum, His word had gone forth that so it should be. He was in heaven adored by angels; He was in the utmost parts of the earth, and of the universe; constellations were balancing in infinite space, and little insects coming into life in African solitudes, and arctic glaciers slowly crushing on their way, by His law; while in human flesh He walked the streets and ate the hard fare of a poor man of His own city Capernaum.

Now if we think in this way, we arrive at two conclusions; one is the depth and incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation, and the other is the extreme nearness of Jesus to each one of us by its means. Yes, there is after all but one great theological difficulty, the Incarnation; accept this, and nothing is really hard afterwards. God has become man, has dwelt in flesh and blood, has united Himself to human nature in this world, has handled common things, and used them for His infinite purposes; it is not much to believe then that He has left behind Him some of this power, that He still works by the same means, and employs men and matter for working spiritual and eternal results.

The great fundamental truth, the Incarnation, is the ultimate point of all unbelieving attack. Men discover difficulties in sacrament and dogma, but they very soon find that these are merely consequences and fruits of another and a radical dogma, out of which they naturally grow, and that is the truth of the Incarnation; and so they are led on to cavil at this truth, and to wipe it out

of their creed. St. John foresaw this in his day, and declared that the one great antichristian error was already, and would always be, the "denying that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh." All through the Christian era, there has been a series of attacks upon this fundamental doctrine. It has been assailed from every possible point; and attacks which have failed in one age, have been resumed in another. Not that there is one uniform front of opposition, not that all the enemies of the faith are agreed, not, as some would have us believe, all intelligent men find the same difficulties and make common cause against a weak, but, for the present, popular delusion. No; not only is not this the case; not only are unbelievers wholly disagreed among themselves, but some of the most convincing replies to certain of the enemies of Christianity have been made by other enemies. So that the Christian advocate may stand by and see his foes destroying one another, every man's sword against his fellow; for they are as intolerant of one another as of the Catholic faith. In their eagerness to establish their own theory, they bring all their skill and strength to upset that which was in favour previously; each proves the other wrong and his position utterly untenable. The last method has been that of critical analysis. The supernatural has been eliminated piece by piece, till we have but the human left; Jesus the citizen of Capernaum, a teacher of morality, on the same level with, or perhaps just a little below, Socrates, Moses, or Mahomet. Men have made themselves familiar with Him, like these His fellow-townsmen of Capernaum, till they have learned like them to despise Him, and to esteem Him indeed but a man; His divinity reasoned away; His miracles explained away; and nothing left that is worth anything to the heart that desires

pardon of sin, and the soul that yearns for immortality, purity, and God.

It is as if a man employed his life in analysing and arguing in what love and friendship consisted, and yet had known neither of them by his own experience, being too busy with theory. It is as if the physiologist dissected the living body, and watched the processes of nutrition, respiration, or circulation, and then eagerly pushed on in the hope of discovering the ultimate sources of life, and the seat of the soul; and lo, as he cuts and probes and opens, and thinks he has just arrived at the object of his search, the life has fled before him, and only a dead mangled corpse is under his hands. We are bounded on all sides by limits and restraints; if we will force ourselves against these, we do not get through them, but merely bruise and disable ourselves, like a bird against the bars of its cage.

There is something else wanted besides cold criticism in the search after the living God. The heart has a share in the work, as well as the intellect. The Pharisees, with the Scriptures in their hands, and Christ Himself standing before their eyes in human flesh, could not see Christ, nor obtain the pardon of sin. There is such a thing, as the Apostle tells us, as "having the understanding darkened." The faculties may be active and clear, and in perfect operation, but there is a cloud, like that which blinded the Egyptians, between the soul and God. We see such things in common life; we see talent and brilliancy, but the man wants heart; his fellowmen admire him, but cannot love him. The mighty God has humbled Himself to our human level and estate, that He may not only atone for sin, and reopen the way to heaven, but that He may

kindle our love and sympathy. The first step to God is the knowledge of sin, the deep desire of pardon and purity ; and then the life-long service of God must be a service of love ; nothing else is possible ; and if it were possible, it would not be worth having.

In God all truth, and purity, and knowledge, and love reside in their perfection ; all that the human heart needs is in Him. The ardent desire of this, is one phase of the love of God. But lest abstract principles should want warmth and reality, and fail to affect the ordinary human heart, there is given us the human life of Christ, with all its commonplace incidents, with its touches of nature, coming home to each one of us. God is our brother, our dear friend, our loving, self-sacrificing Saviour. He has made His poor home among us, that we may know Him well, and trust and love Him ; and that following Him day by day in commonplace duty, in patient, manly endurance, in sturdy choice of right, and above all in daily confession of shortcoming, infirmity, and unworthiness, we may be led on, we know not how, till we open our eyes in that other, and so different city of His, in that other, so different Home of Him, and of us ; His for ever by eternal right of Sonship, ours by right of creation, and then when that was forfeited, ours by right of purchase, bought back by this our Brother, who for a while left His home above, and made His home here, that He might return, no longer alone, but followed by a vast multitude of those like Himself : and among that vast multitude, please God, ourselves.



## THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

*The Imperfection of the World's Best.*

Everything now is imperfect. If we look around or look within, we see, feel, suffer from imperfection, incompleteness, unsatisfaction. Imperfection is the invariable characteristic of all things human. "That which is perfect" is not come yet; everything is as yet "in part." If there is life, there must be progress, growth, development. Standing still means stagnation; not perfection, not triumph, but death, decay, destruction. We must not rest in our imperfection; we must ever aspire upward, we must ever go onward. This is our wisdom; but, alas, all are not wise; and we, alas, are not always wise. We are tempted to sit down and rest in our imperfection; to let others work while we are idle; to see others going on, while we stand still, or go back. We are tempted to cling to passing things that will not stay; to build on shifting sand; to make a home where we are but strangers; to build tabernacles wherever it seems for the moment to be good to abide, instead of setting our face steadfastly to Jerusalem, the city that hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

To all this we are tempted; and, woe to us, have we not yielded sometimes and given way? Pleasures are not without alloy, but still they are sweet; human nature pines for them; the will is weak, and so the seductive, bad thing is done. The world is treacherous; we more than suspect some malefic drug in the fragrant cup that is smilingly offered, and yet we venture to taste it. The higher and the lower is open to us, and, alas! we choose

the lower, the imperfect, "that which is in part." We have been deceived before, and repented; we have made mistakes, and suffered; and yet we yield again. This is a wide-spread evil, a very common and a very mischievous mistake, clinging to the imperfect, resting upon, yea, rejoicing in, trusting to, ending with the imperfect!

Oh, how many of our failures, how many of our troubles, how many of our sins, falls, relapses, have their origin in this unwisdom, being satisfied with the imperfect! How long is this to go on? where is it to end? When are we going to make our choice? If the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shined into our hearts, we "needs must love the highest, when we see it." Like Elisha, we shall leave our oxen, even though we are ploughing with twelve yoke of them, to follow God's prophet. Like Matthew, we shall leave money, "coveting earnestly the best gifts," counting all loss, that we may win Christ; like the Baptist's disciples, we shall leave our master and teacher, even though he be good, wise, and God-sent, when we have found a better, the one Good, God Himself, and He has looked us in the face, and said, "Follow me."

Yes, and has He not called us? Nay, has He not come out of His way to seek us? "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" why; but because the sick need a physician, because sinners need a Saviour, because in our Father's house there are bread, garments, music, dancing, joy, a Father's welcome and embrace, and we are perishing with hunger, sitting naked, filthy, and alone, among strangers and swine, having chosen the worse when we might have had the better.

It is His Spirit that has put into our heart that thought of wise discontent, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

Yes, wise discontent, for all things here are imperfect, and we by faith can see "that which is perfect," and know that it will come. Yes, indeed, it will surely come, it will not tarry. For this let us wait; in sure hope of this let us rest; in deep passionate love of this, let us learn how to pass through this life wisely, how to handle its tempting things, how to touch lightly, and lay down, without a sigh of regret, all the world's best and most precious things. "That which is perfect" will come, and we shall see it with our eyes. Oh the power of that conviction! Oh the sweetness! Oh the rest! Hold on a little longer, O tempest-tossed soul, and wish for the day; fight on a little longer, O soldier of Christ, hard pressed and sorely wounded; bear it still a little longer, O lonely soul, O suffering soul, O soul from whom God Himself seems to have hidden His Face! Now, "we see through a glass darkly;" God's Face is not clear, His ways are mysterious, His Hand seems heavy. Often we cannot understand Him; it is all a riddle without the answer. We cry why, and why? but there is no answer; only the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ softly gleams on ever through the darkness, and it bids us wait, hope, persevere, because the perfect will come, and we shall know even as we are known.

The Church is imperfect; men who love the same Christ cannot love or understand one another. It is dark, and friends mistake friends for foes in the dark. Good men are imperfect; and with the best intentions they do mischief, and hinder one another, the work of the Church, and the good purposes of God. We ourselves are imperfect; oh yes, we are sick, tired, ashamed, out of all patience with ourselves. We are so weak, so inconsistent, such poor, mean, untrustworthy creatures.

But for all this here is the one remedy, "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." The Church shall be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing;" the spirits of just men shall be made perfect, and we—we know not what we shall be; we may be but doorkeepers, we may be but lowest and least in that great kingdom—oh that even that may be ours, for often and often it seems too much to hope that we shall ever get there at all; but at least, "that which is in part shall be done away," and we, if by the wonderful mercy of God we are saved, shall have perfect rest, and peace, and joy, each in his own place, each according to his capacity for receiving the gifts of God.

Be this, then, our life's principle and guiding rule. All now is imperfect; all now is in part; only of this we are sure, we have found it out long ago, we are now acting and ever will act upon the conviction, we hope for nothing perfect now, we rest upon nothing, but take it as it comes; endure it patiently, if it be painful; use it honestly, if it be helpful; sip lightly of the cup if it be sweet and exhilarating, and lay it down again with steady hand; thank God, and pass on. But the perfect will come; that we believe; on that we rest; in that we rejoice; it will come, but not now, not here.

We have no faith in mere human progress, in civilisation, education, political economy; these are well enough in their place, but they are but "in part;" they pass away with the men and minds that gave them birth, with the world and its affairs to which alone they belong; we look higher, we look on further; faith is far-sighted; faith rests on God, not on man. Hope is the anchor of the soul; it is firm fixed in that unseen which faith makes certain to us. But even these mighty principles, faith and

hope, even these themselves shall presently pass away, for they, too, are but "in part;" and when the perfect is come the soul shall rest and exult in the full sight of God, and perfect love, love that alone is perfect,—for love is of God, and God is love, love alone shall reign and rule, and all that is in part shall be done away.

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### FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

*Christ's Price; what He was Sold for, and what was Bought with the Money.*

All the terrible details of Calvary were appointed and fore-ordained by God. Abraham's sacrifice on the same mountain; Joseph's sale by his brethren; Zechariah's mystic words and acts, his giving thirty pieces of silver to the potter, he knew not why, except that so the Lord had appointed him; Jeremiah's purchase of a field at Jerusalem when Israel was captive at Babylon, and his laying up the deed of possession in a potter's vessel; all these, and a thousand other prophetic acts and words, told before of Christ the Saviour of men, valued, sold, slain, and by this redeeming those who blindly went on their little ways, ignorantly doing most tremendous deeds. Man is not a puppet or an automaton, at the mercy of fate or in the hands of God; but his acts follow laws and work out God's eternal purposes. The Jews were free; they did but do what they liked; but all the while they were fulfilling the designs of God, that the atonement should be made for a ruined world. God did not

compel Judas to betray, nor the Jews to hate, nor Pilate to condemn the Son of God ; only He put Himself into the line of events, the sequence of cause and effect, and let the end come naturally by inevitable laws. Cupidity and lust of money lead a man to treachery always, not only in the case of Judas. Envy leads to injury and murder always, if allowed free and full exercise, not only in the case of the Jewish rulers. Fickleness is always a characteristic of mobs, not only of that of the Jews. Time-serving is common with men in power, and is not confined to Pilate.

So with all else that was instrumental in the death of Christ ; things common to man in all ages followed their invariable laws, but they were bringing out, by obscure and devious ways, the end that the Lord had appointed. " If I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me ? " said our Lord to the Jews. Because they were given up to lies, and loved not the truth. Why did not mankind love the perfect Man when they saw Him ? Because they were blinded by prejudices, poring over low purposes, misled by false standards of right and wrong. Why did Judas sell, and the nation's chief men buy, the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver ? Because such is the world's ordinary estimate of God. What do men value God at now ? Ask kings ; they value honour, territory, success in war ; but God is sacrificed always, if He stands in the way of these. Ask statesmen ; God is an inconvenience in their counsels and policy ; they have agreed together not to mention Him, and He is quietly got rid of. Ask the rich ; God's share of their riches is the thirty pieces of silver ; and they really think they give too much. Ask professing Christians ; no fixed price, only as cheap as

possible. The chief priests, indeed, fixed the price of Christ, but Judas accepted it; and Judas was Christ's personal friend and chosen disciple. The world regulates the proper thing to be done in religion, and the majority of Christian men and women accept it. Sunday church-going, if perfectly convenient; but not on week days. Dinner parties, concerts, and such like; but the worship and honour of God is really not worth a thought.

It is not a thing of the past that God should be valued at the price of a dead slave, killed by accident; it did not happen once only; it is done still, and every day. Alas, the "familiar friend" still is traitor; the secret bargain is offered and accepted, and Christ is bought and sold for the meanest price. There is nothing new in it. God in His love determined to redeem the world, and He knew that man would do his part, as soon as He placed Himself in his power. There is nothing new. The Lamb of God has been slain from the foundation of the world. Pilate, Judas, Barabbas, and the rest, there has been an unfailling succession of all these from the first, and there they are still doing their bad work to-day.

The Cross is set up; who cares? There are only a few women about it now, as at first. One man to three women, as once at Calvary, so now in church. Oh, it makes the heart weary and sick, to see how little hold religion has upon people; how, notwithstanding all that is done, it is a mere matter of routine, and has no command of the affections. What must our Lord think of it? Do not His wounds open again, and begin to bleed? There in a beautiful room sits a fair woman, reading a story, that some one has invented, of

sorrows that never happened ; and that fair woman's beautiful eyes are moist with tears ; but never in her life did she shed a tear over the true story of her Saviour's Passion. A theatre is crowded from floor to roof, night after night ; a clever actress imitates a mother's grief for her child, and almost all the women, and many of the men, are sobbing audibly in irresistible sympathy. But they come not to stand at the foot of the Cross with the sorrowful mother of the Crucified. There is a funeral ; at the grave-side there are weepers ; at home in the silent house there are weepers ; but when the dearest of all dear Friends dies, where are the tears ? We are ashamed to weep ; most of us feel not the least inclination to weep. "The way of the world !" Yes, that is bad ; but it is the way also of Christians ; and how much worse is that !

O Judas, sell Him to me, the Pearl of great price ! What shall I give in exchange, that I may possess Him ? Give thyself, and thou shalt have Him for thine own.

Such, then, was Christ's price ; see now what it fetched in the world's market. It bought the potter's field ; a poor, rough, unsightly bit of ground, no doubt ; a bit that had been dug up and burrowed into for the clay, and left in ragged heaps and holes ; and so they made a graveyard of it, a burial place for strangers, for homeless, friendless, nameless, penniless sojourners, who happened to die at Jerusalem. The name clung to it, "the field of blood." The punctilious priests would not put the money quietly into the treasury ; all would have been forgotten if they had ; but His blood must by their own act cry from the ground against them evermore, "as the Lord appointed."

"As the Lord appointed." Can we discern any fitness ? God's reasons are manifold and deep, we presume not to



say what they were ; but can we not venture to think we see one of them here ? Centuries before, Abraham the father of the faithful had received wonderful promises from God, but he lived a lifelong wanderer ; and when he died, what was his territorial possession in the world ? A grave ; only a grave ! He had no possession even so much as to set his foot upon ; but he had bought a grave ; that, and that only, was his. Was not all this “ as the Lord appointed ? ” The true seed of Abraham, the faithful, they too are strangers and pilgrims upon earth ; the children of promise, heirs of a glorious heritage ; Christ has done great things for them, purchased most precious things for them ; but what has He given them in this life ? what did He buy for them in this world ? Only a grave ; a stranger's grave ! He had not where to lay His Head, when He was born, nor all His life long ; and even His grave was not His own. None so poor as He. And He will have His faithful like Him in the world. The price of His Blood has bought us untold wealth in the world to come ; wide possessions in the true promised land, His native land, our home ; but here in this world only a grave.

Judas valued Mary's ointment at three hundred pence, and grudged it, and thought it wasted upon the Lord's Body. The rulers of His nation valued Christ Himself at thirty pieces, and Judas was satisfied with the price, and closed with the bargain. It is so still. God so valued thy soul, O man, that He gave Himself to buy it back from thrall ; but what dost thou value it at ? Men hawk their souls about, holding them so cheap that they close with the first bidder, if he offer but a mess of pottage ; selling them as Titus sold the captive Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem, in due retribution for their awful bargain,

not for thirty pieces each, but thirty Jews for one piece of silver! Judas purchased a field with the price of His Lord, coveting a name and property; but presently he died by his own hand; his field was called "the field of blood," and was filled with corrupting corpses. So is every one that layeth up treasure on the earth; he soweth to the flesh, and his harvest is rottenness. Dives was rich one day, and the next day in torments. The man of the world thought that he had much goods for many years, and God required his soul of him that same night. "Is it then a time to receive money, and garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants?" Judas says, "Yes, and I will have them, if I sell my Lord, and lose my soul." He does both; and what does it profit him?

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### SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

#### *Safeguards for the Great Middle Class of Christians.*

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is one of the most awful passages of Holy Scripture. There are others that are in themselves terrible, but they do not apply themselves as this story seems to do to so many of those who fill our churches, and with whom our lot is cast all our life long. There is no mention of great sin; there is nothing singular in any way about the first man's life. It is the life of the well-to-do on every side; and then see where it all ends. The thought of this has led men in other ages to give up at once and for ever all the enjoyments and comforts of life, and driven them in mortal

terror of losing their souls to a life of mortification and sternest asceticism. And who with these, and so many other like words of our Lord in his ears, can blame such men?

But, is there no other way? Is there no authority and countenance for living the ordinary life of mankind, and yet having a good hope of avoiding the terrible retribution of this man in the parable? There certainly is such authority, both in the New Testament and in the practice of the Church; and precepts and rules for the guidance of such a life are also to be found. Let us then, without staying to prove or to investigate the sources of these authorities and precepts, briefly enumerate some of the principal safeguards of the ordinary life of the Christian living in the world.

The first is a spirit of Thankfulness. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Here is salt to season daily bread and make it wholesome. The spirit of thankfulness seems to be altogether wanting in both the rich men denounced by our Lord. "In all things give thanks;" let us do so literally. For example, we get up in the morning in health, we have food and loving ones about us; let us thank God. Of course we do so in our private and family prayers, but that is not enough; let ejaculations of thankfulness become habitual and natural to us. We need not obtrude them on others; it would often be "casting pearls before swine;" let it be between God and our own soul. We return home weary; there is what we need ready for us; let us receive it with thanksgiving. Where is there not room for a "Thank God?" There is room for it side by side with every comfort, every pleasure, every exemption from pain or sorrow or other

common ill of life; the sight of things beautiful, a draught of water to thirsty lips, a bed for tired limbs, the daily meals that are so common, the consciousness of health, freedom from pain and apprehension. The devout soul breathes many a "Thank God," as days and hours pass; and so he receives his "good things," without danger of ultimate "evil things." There is more in this than mere thankfulness. It is the acknowledging of God's rights; it recognises the Fatherhood of God; it keeps up the intercourse between God and the soul; it is the very spirit of prayer and godliness; it is the direct opposite to the spirit of that rich man, the spirit that is wrapped up in self, that lives in the present moment, and forgets God.

The next remedy and safeguard is Almsgiving. Here, too, this man in the parable failed. Almsgiving is not a charity, not a merit, but a duty; not a matter of choice, but a necessity. Give and take is a universal law of life. If everything that is taken in is retained, life is poisoned and destroyed. This man received good things, but did not give, and so he arrested the circulation of blessing, and it corrupted itself into a curse to him. Money is not only useless when it is hoarded, but it corrodes and wastes itself; and so God always sets a Lazarus at our door to receive not only what he wants, but what we sorely want to get rid of. "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold all things are clean unto you;" "give and it shall be given unto you;" the giving, we see, in this matter comes before the receiving. What do we want? let us buy it; prayer and almsgiving will most likely return to our own bosom with that thing we most need.

Next there is Self-denial. We may not be obliged to

give up everything dear to human nature, but we cannot be Christians without self-denial. This man fared sumptuously "every day ;" there were no fast days, or days of abstinence with him. The Church has given us a better rule in this matter. Men may ridicule the Church's regulations, but they rest upon common sense, upon a deep knowledge of human nature, and upon a principle that cannot be safely neglected. The Christian, whose eating and drinking is altogether untouched by his religion, is either a very ignorant person, or there is little or no self-denial in anything else in his life. The mere animal instinct of self-preservation keeps a man from things injurious ; decency and morality keep a man from things unlawful ; but Christ's rule makes a man often deny himself in things lawful. The beast guides himself by his appetites and instincts ; the civilised heathen by his intellect and reason ; but the Christian man lives and walks by the law of God, and the example of Jesus Christ. That which is lawful, is not always expedient ; that which is good, is not good for every one. The Christian keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection ; he is master in his own soul ; he knows the value to the spiritual body, as well as the natural body, of abstinence, of bitter tonics, of remedial pains, of action and reaction.

Then there is the steady and regular use of the Means of Grace. A Christian without prayer, worship, and Communion, is as great an anomaly as a soldier without arms, or a body without food, light, and air. The man in the parable carried about a dead and corrupting soul in his pampered body for years, and when the body died, the dead soul was seen, and went to its own place. As light and heat come from the sun, and the communication must be kept up always, or all living things in the

world will die, so the soul depends upon God ; from Him it came at the beginning ; to Him it goes at the end ; so with Him it must all along hold communion if it is to live.

Next there is the ever-present Remembrance of the End. "In all things remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss." This is just what this man did not ; unbelief was at the root of all, not perhaps active, but passive, latent unbelief ; a living in the present ; living for this world only. This is a danger still imminent ; and the danger is greater just in proportion as life is for us endowed with "good things ;" that is, in proportion to our riches. The richer the man, the greater his danger. An enjoyable present, and "much goods laid up for many years," the world's ideal of good fortune, this it is that puts a man at a disadvantage, and imperils his salvation. It is to those who have this that this parable is specially addressed. They are the "five brethren" to whom the voice from the dead comes, warning them, lest presently they come to that place of torment.

Lastly, there is the safeguard of Progress. In things spiritual, as in things natural, standing still is the immediate prelude of death. The condition which we have been considering, is the lowest consistent with spiritual existence ; it is minimum Christianity. A soul in such a position stands, as it were, only just upon the rock ; beyond and above are many steps of progress ; behind there is but one step, over the gulf to ruin. Sleep, carelessness, trifling ; in a moment these may cause the fatal slip. Safety lies in getting further from the edge, and climbing upwards. A low standard of religion always involves a high degree of uncertainty of salvation. If St. Paul and other saints felt anxious as

to their salvation; what should such as we feel, whose standard is so mean, whose good purposes are so weak, who at our best are but babes in Christ, minimum Christians, who can but hope to be just saved?

From all this there comes the solemn question for some others, who know that they are not even yet penitent and pardoned, who know that they are living in sin, and utterly away from God; "If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

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### THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

#### *Isaac's Fraud and its Lessons.*

The deceit by which Jacob obtained his father's blessing has furnished the unbeliever with an argument against the morality of the Old Testament, and many believers have been scandalised and made uneasy by it. It is said, "Here are fraud, lying, and deceit, blessed by God; here is a favourite of God, an Old Testament saint, the father of the chosen people, the heir of the promises, the progenitor of the Messiah, transgressing the common rules of truth and morality, without blame, without punishment; nay, gaining by his falsehood a perpetual blessing."

Now there is a good deal to be said in reply to all this, and the whole transaction may be put into altogether a different light. In the first place, we must remember that we have no right to judge men of that day by Christian standards. God's revelation has been

gradual. The education of the human conscience has been slow and progressive. God did not anticipate the natural growth of events, of ideas, and truths. We do not expect to meet with the results of nineteenth-century astronomical, or geological, or chemical discovery in Genesis; and it was no part of God's will to reveal to man, not even to His saints, that which the ordinary course of mental and scientific progress would discover. Just so it was not till the fulness of time was come that the childhood of mankind with its half knowledge, its partial apprehension of the great fundamental principles of morality, passed away; the schoolmaster was set aside, and the Divine Teacher openly spoke with authority; "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you." "The times of man's ignorance God winked at."

Where is there any approval given by Divine authority of all this lying and deceit? It may be said, in the result which confirmed the blessing thus obtained. But this can hardly be said to be approval of lying. Was there no punishment for the fraud? Was not Jacob at once driven from his home into hard, long, galling servitude? Was not Rebekah deprived of the sight and society of her favourite son, through her act and its consequences?

But we have not yet got to the bottom of the affair. Were Jacob and Rebekah the only culprits in this transaction? Was not the greatest offender Isaac himself? Was not Esau his accomplice in endeavouring to play Jacob an underhand trick; and what is much more serious, and the key to the whole problem, were they not plotting to upset the decree of God's providence, and endeavouring to withstand and reverse His will? From



the day that Rebekah had inquired of the Lord, before her children were born, it had been declared that "the elder should serve the younger." Isaac knew this, yet his blind partiality for Esau led him to try and force the hand of God to follow his prejudice. He seems to have given Esau the eldest son's birthright, notwithstanding God's express choice of Jacob; and at the last he tried to get his own way, in spite of God's known will. And God does not interfere, but allows events to work out their natural results, and human passions and frailties develop their inevitable consequences. Esau is a "profane person," a sensualist, with undisciplined passions and will, a mere man of the world. Jacob is timid and scheming, and bides his time to gain his just rights of which his father's dishonourable partiality had deprived him. Esau comes in one day hungry and impatient, and sees Jacob with food ready at the moment; he asks for it; Jacob's cunning sees his opportunity, he asks for a peaceable acknowledgment of his rights, pledged by the outward sign of giving and eating food; and Esau, greedy, animal, caring nothing for his priestly duties as eldest son, accepts the bargain at once; and Jacob gains by concession that which by right had always been his.

So in the matter of the blessing; Jacob was by God's special selection the eldest son, and had a right to the divine inheritance which Isaac, in God's name as Abraham's heir, was bound, before he died, solemnly to transmit to the son, whom God had already clearly designated by name. But Isaac tried to overreach God, and God, if we may so say, stood silently by, and moved not; but human passion and human cunning did the work without His interference; natural laws worked out their own results; a mother's love, a woman's quick

observation, a woman's contrivance and daring, a quiet man's way of circumventing his end by clever scheming and unscrupulousness as to means,—these mere human emotions, common to human nature in all times and places, these came into operation and brought their own consequences in their train; but they brought also, as by a side-wind, the execution of the eternal decrees of God, the directing of the events of the world, and the regulation of the fortunes of mankind to the end of time.

It is impossible for us to say where the liberty of man ends, and the overruling providence of God compels events to shape themselves to His will; but it will often help us to gain glimpses of the spotless justice of God, if, as here, we see how the laws that govern man's nature are ever working on in uniform and invariable lines, and men alone are responsible for that which seems at first to be hard to reconcile with our ideas of the eternal justice of God. Bad men and evil spirits seek their own ends in what they do; they attain them very often; but it is presently seen that God has been working by their means, and that His will has been done on earth as it is in heaven. The leech greedy for blood follows its instinct and gratifies its lust; but there is another issue, the sick man is relieved. So, doubtless, in the great events of history, and in the little daily circumstances of our unimportant lives, there are, if only we had eyes to see them, other results besides those that lie upon the surface, and which have their place in the inscrutable counsels of God. Sometimes, as in this event, we see them; more often they are hidden from us, but will be displayed in future ages to others, and perhaps to us.

“There is a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

How many instances are there in Scripture of men flying in the face of God, and determining to have their own way in spite of Him? Think of Pharaoh, Balaam, Ahab, and many more; and see how the same thing occurs always as happened to Isaac. God disdains, as it were, to enter the lists with His poor foolish little creature who ventures to pit himself against his Maker; He lets him alone with his passions, and the passions of men about him; and lo, there is a conflict, not between God and man, but between human will and human will, the natural processes of mind, or lust, or other impulses of human nature, and the end presently appears; there are many results, issues, consequences, but there is among them the working out of the decrees of God's providence.

The same, doubtless, may be said of the operations of inanimate nature. It was a saying of Napoleon that "Providence was always on the side of the strongest battalions;" and when his army set out on the Russian campaign, he ridiculed the idea of failure; but such a winter set in, after the burning of Moscow, as had not been known for many years; and his mighty army melted away, though no stronger battalions were opposed to it.

Men always find out at last that God does His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, and that none can stay His hand. Kings and governments have tried it, and often seemed to succeed, but time has shown that, like Pharaoh, and Cyrus, and many more, they were all the while, without knowing it, only executing God's decrees. Cæsar issues an edict that all the world should be taxed, and one result is that Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem, and the prophecies are fulfilled that Christ shall be born there. And where one

such consequence is known to us, how many must there have been which we do not yet understand.

If this is true of the great events of the world, is it not true also of events that are not great in themselves, but which are great to us because our lives turn upon them? We look back upon the short span of our lives, and we see trivial circumstances, leading to most momentous issues, that have coloured our whole life, and perhaps made it really what it has been.

We come then to this practical conclusion, that man may fight against God, but never get the victory; that God's laws work out slowly and surely their inevitable results in nature, in history, in man. Sin, disobedience, wilfulness, never succeed; and if this life does not display the failure, it is only because it will be more surely seen when the real end of events has come. God is patient; God hides His hand; but His words cannot fail, His promises and threatenings must be fulfilled; and we, in our little lives, in our follies and sins, in our rebellions and mistakes, cannot by any possibility be exceptions to the invariable, unalterable law. Our sins will find us out. God is true, though every man be a liar.

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### MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

#### *The Mutual Knowledge of Christ and His Faithful Servants.*

Nathanael, who is the same as Bartholomew, was, like the rest of the apostles, an obscure person, unknown

beyond the narrow limits of his own little circle, and his native town. Cana was not far from Nazareth, yet he felt sure the people there knew nothing of him. He had heard of Jesus, but he was quite certain that Jesus had never heard of him. Therefore, when Philip brings him to Jesus, and He meets him at once with words of familiarity and looks that said more even than His words, Nathanael is astonished and exclaims, "Whence knowest Thou me?" But our Lord's next words astonish him yet more, giving him clear proof of the omniscience of Jesus; and at once Nathanael bows his whole soul in reverential acceptance of His Divinity, and becomes in life and death His faithful disciple.

Both the knowledge of Christ and that of His disciple are wonderful and supernatural. The One sees the distant searcher for truth and hears his question with his friend; the other, the moment he stands face to face with Christ, knows Him. The Christ has come from Nazareth, of which the prophets say nothing, of which a current proverb says, that no good can come out of it. The Christ stands before Nathanael, not as his teachers had taught him to expect to see Him, mighty, great, wonderful, but a poor working man; but the man without guile, the simple, earnest searcher for truth, sees by supernatural light, and worships the long-desired Lord of his heart, the hidden, humbled God.

What a wonderful lesson for this age of inquiry! Men are rejecting old guides and teachers, forsaking ancient landmarks; and yet desiring, or at least professing to desire, to find God and His truth. But all their search seems but to lead them farther from God; till they sit down dark and sullen, embittered and disappointed, and cry out with a sort of malignant satisfaction, that it is all

of no use ; that they will search no more ; that God is unknown and unknowable.

Must there not be great fault somewhere ? God can be known, and felt, and seen ; God desires to be known and loved by every heart. He is not far from any one of us ; He wills to be to all, what He is to so many, the life and joy of their soul, the rest, the satisfaction, the stay of their life. Are men searching with guileless hearts like Nathanael ; pure, and with pure intention ; not with preconceived notions as to what they think God must be, and shall be ? Are they ready to give up prejudices ; ready to accept God, as He reveals Himself ; ready to follow His call, and do His will ?

For what avails the finding of God if a man's whole being does not at once bow down to Him ? God is not a subject for curiosity, or scientific inquiry ; not even for admiration ; God must be always God, and all His creatures must obey and adore Him, subjecting their heart and will absolutely and unreservedly to Him, at once and for ever. He must be everything, and the creature nothing. The creature must and does find his truest joy in loving himself in God, and merging his will in His.

Look at Nathanael ; he was unknown at Cana. What was he after he found God in Christ ? what is he now ? Still unknown ; known only to God. What was his life ? what were his labours ? what words, and thoughts, and ministrations were his ? what success had he ? How many converts acknowledge him as their father in the Gospel ? what were his sufferings ? where is the history of his brave endurance ? where are the bright and glorious records of his martyrdom ? unknown ; all unknown, except to God ; and he is most content that it should be so. Nathanael is one of the twelve foundation-stones of the

Eternal Kingdom of Christ. Nathanael sits upon one of the twelve thrones that circle the throne of God. Nathanael has gazed into the Face of God for eighteen hundred years ; he knows God, and is known of Him ; he is content to be unknown to all beside.

There has been no alteration in this rule of Christ's Gospel. The true way of greatness is not the world's way ; it is a quiet, secret, unknown way. The world's way is not so much to be great, as to be accounted great. The world can only judge by the outside ; it is quite content with gilt ; solid gold it thinks rather wasteful, gilding looks just as well. Pretend a good deal ; have plenty of self-assertion ; do not spare boasting ; the world will like you all the better for it. The world will take you very much at your own price.

But what is this to the guileless man ? He cannot act on these principles ; he knows what he really is ; friends may speak well of him, think well of him ; his fellow-Christians may esteem him highly ; his own natural heart, or the flattering enemy may whisper, " Well done ! clever man ! honest man ! good man ! " But the guileless soul looks up, and sees the eye of God upon him ; upon him ? nay, that is not all ; within him, searching him through and through, as light searches glass, and lightens up every particle ; and how can he, how dare he, take honour to himself in that presence, knowing what he is, feeling that that eye sees all he is ? He sees failure, frailty, sin, unworthy motive ; he sees his act, if it be a good one, inspired by God, and himself but an instrument, a bungling servant, who ought to have done much better. He has done it for God, and not for himself. That eye makes him abashed with its steady unfaltering gaze ; it makes him very humble ; it makes him writhe under flattery, and

wince under praise, for it seems all a lie, as he stands in the open sight of Him who knows all things.

But what is the thought of the guilty soul? "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." O poor, naked, sinful soul, gathering fig-leaves to hide thy shame! Disobedient, and fancying to steal away and not be found out! O foolish thing! what! hide from God? dost thou think really that it can be done? yet people try it. They go on and are not found out by their fellow-men. "No one knows; that is the comfort, no one knows!" O fool! "If I say the darkness shall cover me; the darkness is no darkness with Thee." The day is coming, O sinful soul! when thou shalt stand before thy Judge, and cry with horror at the public display of all thy vileness, thy meanness, before angels and men! "Whence knowest Thou me? surely God was in that place, and I knew it not."

The earnest man feels that the one great question is, "How can I be pardoned?" He is determined to get rid of the burden of his sin, cost him what it may. He lays his tale of sin before his Lord, without reserve, without excuse; for he knows that His eye is upon him all the while, as the master's eye is upon the book which the scholar is reading, noting whether he repeats each word. He lays all down at the foot of the Cross, and knows that the Precious Blood has touched him, and that he is forgiven. There is no more the astonished exclamation, "Whence knowest Thou me?" The conviction of God's all-seeing eye when once felt, is never lost again; and with it there comes a deep, restful sense of trust. The child feels safe while its father's eye is upon it; it feels brave too; for when it is alone, it feels frightened and wretched; it believes that its father can protect it



from every danger. What is this instinct but the type and shadow of the true and real trust of the child of God in his Heavenly Father? "Thou art with me, I will fear no evil." The certainty that God knows all; that He is not for a moment ignorant of anything that is happening, that it all has its reason and meaning, and that it will all work together for good; this gives peace which nothing else can give; this leads the martyr calmly on to death; this soothes the heart and makes it content, though it cannot understand; this makes a man bear trouble and misfortune; this gives him calmness when misunderstood, or misjudged, or unjustly treated; this makes a man meet death, not with stoical hardness, or mere animal courage, or reckless bravado, but with calm manly faith.

And when the soul enters the unseen world, and other souls meet it, and welcome it as a well-known friend, an expected and much-desired companion; then will come once more the words of surprise, "Whence knowest thou me, and thou, and thou?" till the wondrous conviction breaks in upon the soul, that members of the same family, children of the same Father, must have a likeness that each can trace in the other.

These are some of the mysteries that Nathanael knows now. His Lord promised that he should see greater things than those which so amazed him when first he knew his Lord. He has been with Him now these many centuries, but still the word is true, still the promise goes on, "Thou shalt see greater things than these," for there are boundless fields of knowledge in God, and the glorified spirit explores these more and more, and never finds an end; fulness of joy ever, yet the capacity ever increasing; more and ever more knowledge of God, and in that knowledge love and joy unutterable.

## TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

*An Apology for Jezebel.*

The name of Jezebel has become, through Scripture warrant, typical of all that is depraved and wicked in woman. The Bible view of Jezebel presents her to us as a woman who seduced her husband and his kingdom to degraded idolatry; who persecuted God's prophets; who dealt in treachery, bloodshed, witchcraft, and impurity; and who expiated a life of crime by a shameful and horrible death.

But let us for a moment regard Jezebel as she regarded herself, and as her husband and her nation regarded her. She was the daughter of the king of Tyre, that is, she was a royal princess of an ancient and powerful kingdom. Her people at that time stood first in the ranks of civilisation, first in arts, science, knowledge, commerce, enterprise. When Solomon would build his temple, he naturally went to Tyre for artificers of all kinds. Phœnician ships were on every sea, from Britain to Africa and India. The Tyrian dye clothed the kings of the world. The art of writing is said to have been the invention of this wonderful people. They did not care for conquest, like Egypt and Babylon, but in all intellectual power, in the arts that most exalt man, in trade, in invention, in discovery, they were far beyond every other people of the world. In a word, what we in the present day call Culture, Civilisation and Progress had their seat in Tyre and its colonies, some of which, such as Carthage, rivalled the mother city and Rome itself.

All the education, then, that such a people could give was Jezebel's. She was also evidently highly gifted by nature, and quite able to appreciate and to make use of all her privileges and advantages. Like her fellow country-woman Dido, like Cleopatra, Zenobia, and other magnificent women of antiquity, her soul raised her above the common throng and compelled her to rule and command. In marrying Ahab she became the wife of a petty king of an obscure and small country, where everything that she esteemed great and worthy and beautiful was unknown. She began at once, therefore, to reform ; to inaugurate civilisation and progress. She "stirred up" the king to build, to cultivate the arts and sciences ; she tried to educate and polish the rude and ignorant Israelites, and to raise them to the standard of her own cultured race. Isolation was the great obstacle to all this ; Israel had separated itself from the nations of the world, especially in religion. Jezebel, therefore, brought learned priests, and the ancient faith, with its mysteries for the learned, its gorgeous rites for the multitude, its seductive tenets and practices that were based upon the instincts and cravings of human nature. All over the ancient world this religion was found in some form. The great God was known to the initiated, but for the people at large the sun was the symbol under which He was adored. The sun, the ruler of the universe, the source of life, and all that makes the earth bright and beautiful. At Babylon, in Egypt, at Tyre, even across the Atlantic in Mexico and Peru, this system prevailed. The sun-deity had many titles ; at Tyre he was called Baal. At his shrine man's best was offered, the life of the beautiful child and the chastity of woman. Man's instincts were deemed most holy, and not to be thwarted ; and the sun's

productive power indicated the sanctity of the reproductive powers of living things.

But while this refined and commanding intellect was pushing her high and wide purposes, there came a rude, ignorant, violent bigot (as she considered) to oppose her. His nakedness scarcely clothed with the hide of some hairy beast, with wild unkempt hair and rough coarse manners, Elijah bursts in upon this exquisite court from time to time, and denounces everything that is dearest to it, with, what it esteems, brutal violence. At last when, one day, the people were wild with famine and excitement, this fanatic (as it calls him) persuaded them to massacre all the queen's countrymen, the ministers of religion, the instruments of her cherished schemes for the advancement and education of the nation, and so overwhelmed all progress and civilisation in a torrent of blood.

Here, then, are the two sides of the question. We are familiar with the Scriptural view; we have now seen something of the case as viewed from Jezebel's standpoint. What, then, is the true verdict, when these opposite pleas have been made?

We see at once that everything depends upon the question of a revelation from God. There is a great deal to be said for Jezebel and her policy; she was probably not only unconscious of wrong, but quite certain of her rectitude. The only question then is, what did God think of it all? What was God's will? As to this, with our Christian faith, we have no manner of doubt. It was Israel's mission to overthrow the religious systems of the old world. If they had been true to their charter Tyre itself would have been taken, just as Jericho was, and its crimes and filthiness atoned for by blood. It was Israel's mission to be a separate and special people;

first to be godly and holy as a nation, and then to teach the rest of the world the same principles of life and conduct. It was Israel's mission to put God first and to subordinate all other considerations to His will.

Now what Israel was commissioned to do in the old world, the Christian Church is commissioned to do now. Jezebel still lives; St. John in the Apocalypse speaks of her. She is the incarnation of the world's spirit in all ages; the world that worships progress, the natural and fallen powers of man, both of mind and body; the world that is beautiful and seductive, clever and most plausible, that can render fairest reason for foulest crime, that flatters man and bids him make his life as splendid and voluptuous as he can, that scorns the rough purity of prophets, that sneers while martyrs die, that calls men narrow and fools who put God first, that thinks it better that men should be clever than pure, rich than holy, first in war or in trade rather than first in Christ-like character. The world that crucified God; that hates with undiminished but often suppressed hatred, all who believe what God has revealed of Himself and of His will for man's present life.

In our own day men are dividing more and more into two camps, those who accept Revelation, and those who deny it. The latter have the bias of human pride and sensuality on their side, all the vast herd of humanity who hope that Christianity is not true, because it crosses their will and thwarts their lusts. They profess liberality; they claim broad and lofty aims, and promise much to mankind.

Solomon's days for the Church are over, Ahab's days seem to be come, or coming. It was the belief of the

early Church that in the last days Elijah would come again, and testify for God, and be put to death. If he come not in person, his spirit will be needed in the last days, and it is needed now. Jezebel is at work; she is directing the counsels of the rulers of the world. She will build noble cities, launch navies, teach arts and sciences, cultivate taste, make the world beautiful, bid men be sensual, and defend and praise them for it; and sitting on Ahab's ivory throne, write letters in his name to put the Elijahs and Naboths to death, and hunt God's servants into dens and caves of the earth.

Not that the Church is opposed to learning, science, invention, the fine arts, trade, or discovery. God's ancient people were separated from all these things for good reasons, but since the Son of God Himself came into the world as a man, since the Holy Ghost has dwelt among us, all things may be sanctified. There have always been, there always will be ascetic Elijahs, separate from the pleasures of life, living alone, mortified, spiritual lives, denying the body its natural gratifications, and the mind its delights, following closer than ordinary men the steps of their Lord; but for the majority of Christians, the general precept seems to be, to "use this world without abusing it," to enjoy life's sweet things without giving themselves up to them, to cultivate the powers of the intellect, to investigate the wonders of creation, and be led through nature up to nature's God. To the pure all things are pure; to the disciple of the new Adam all things are good, and the curse is removed. The Church contemplates every estate of life, and is ready to bless each. There is a place within her fold for merchant and peasant, for soldier and philosopher. If the book of Revelation symbolises

the world under the epithet of Jezebel, the same book symbolises the Church as a woman adorned with all God's choicest gifts. It may be that the Church's highest destiny will never be completely realised in this world, but what man's perversity may hinder here, will still surely come about hereafter in the triumphant Church, when all knowledge, all beauty, all joy will be the outward mantle of the Bride of Christ, whose inward glory is the indwelling Spirit of God.

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### WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

#### *Living in the World.*

The world, as St. Paul knew it, was a very beautiful, a very magnificent world. The ancient civilisation, the growth of thousands of years, had culminated in the wonderful greatness of the Roman Empire. From Greece, from Egypt, from the East, Rome had inherited the world's wisdom, the experience of ages, the accumulated treasures of man's industry, skill, invention. One grand uniform system had gradually been extended all round the Mediterranean Sea, till the fairest countries of the world, with the climate most suited to life and enjoyment and a rich soil productive of all that man wants, all obeyed one ruler, recognised one code of laws, and enjoyed prosperity and happiness such as had never before been known.

We who live in such a climate as ours, and perhaps in towns in the midst of so much that is hideous and revolting, can with difficulty imagine the charm of

human life as it was in those days. The bright sun shone in the azure sky upon smiling cornfields and vineyards. There were no dull, smoke-begrimed towns, with their dark noisome streets; the cities were beautiful with marble temples and baths; fountains of pure water bubbled in the squares; exquisite statuary stood among shady trees and fragrant flowers. There was no hurry and rush; man had time to live quietly, and enjoy the beauties of the world. Century after century passed, generation followed generation, and each saw the world grander, more decked with lovely things, more fruitful, more fitted for the happy home of man. Men looked back with satisfaction, looked around them with delight, looked onward with calmness; there was not a cloud upon the horizon. They spoke of the Roman Empire as "Eternal;" and its marvellous, vast, beautiful capital as the very symbol of immovable permanence.

Those only who have wandered among the ruins of ancient Rome can imagine what she must have been in the days of her pride and glory. The skeleton, which alone remains, gives some indications of her power; sculpture here and there preserved in museums helps us to understand the perfection of her ornamentation. "Look at the Palatine Hill, penetrated, traversed, cased with brickwork, till it appears a work of man, not of nature. Run your eye along the cliff from Ostia to Terracina, covered with the debris of masonry; gaze around the Bay of Baïæ, whose rocks have been made to serve as the foundations and the walls of palaces; and in those mere remains lasting to this day you will have a type of the moral and political strength of the establishments of Rome. Think



of the aqueducts making for the imperial city for miles across the plain; think of the straight roads stretching off again from that one centre to the ends of the earth; consider the vast territory round about it, strewn to this day with countless ruins; follow in your imagination its suburbs, extending along its roads for as much, at least in some directions, as forty miles; number up its continuous mass of population, amounting, as grave authors say, to almost six millions." Hear what one says who saw all this: "The world has more of cultivation every day; all places are opened up now; smiling farms have obliterated the wilderness; tillage has tamed the forest land; flocks have put to flight the beasts of prey; sandy tracts are sown; rocks are put into shape; marshes are drained. There are more cities now than there were cottages at one time; everywhere there is a home, a population, a state and a livelihood."

Such was the world in St. Paul's day. But the Apostle's warning to the Christians living in the very midst of this was, "Be not conformed to this world." Why was this? For one reason, because it was all soon to be swept away. Everything seemed firm and immovable; every enemy was humbled; Rome sat as a queen, and there was no one to dispute her rights or share her power. Men said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." But even as they spoke the decree had gone forth for judgment. "Great Babylon came into remembrance before God." In the distant and unknown regions of the far North and North-East, where Rome's armies had never penetrated, there dwelt hordes of wild men, little removed from savage beasts. They increased and multiplied exceedingly, till their land became too narrow for them; and then a mysterious

impulse possessed them, and they moved south and west over the mountains that had shut them in, and shut out the civilisation and progress of nobler families of mankind. They burst in like a flood, like a devouring fire, upon that peaceful, beautiful, cultivated world; and their glory was simply to destroy. Goths, Lombards, Huns, on they came in their countless hosts, wave after wave. As the locusts eat up the vegetation and leave nothing but a wilderness, so these awful hordes of savages swept away in a few years the civilisation of ages. They revelled in slaughter; they never spared; they slew all, old and young, man, woman, and child; they burned, pulled down, defaced; they never ceased till everything was destroyed.

One who had witnessed all this writes thus:—"The cities are destroyed, the land devastated, the earth depopulated. No one remains in the country; scarcely any inhabitants in the towns; yet even the poor remains of humankind are still smitten daily and without intermission. Before our eyes some are carried away captive, some mutilated, some murdered. She herself, who once was mistress of the world, we behold how Rome fares, worn down by manifold and incalculable distresses, the bereavement of citizens, the attack of foes, the reiteration of overthrows. Where is her senate? where are her people?"

"The fashion of this world passeth away." All the old-world civilisation was swept away, monuments, population, religion, customs, knowledge; all lost, buried in oblivion, as if it had never been. Only here and there a few traces and relics are left to tell what once was, like the fossils that men dig out of the bowels of the earth, the sole remains of whole families of animals,

which catastrophes have swept from off the earth. Yes, such is the rule for this world; it never continues long in one stay. Christ had come to tell mankind the true theory of human life; and the sum of all was this, that this world as it is is not man's home; that he must expect and prepare for new heavens and a new earth, and live here as a sojourner, as tenant at will; not like Cæsar in a palace, but like Abraham in a tent.

But this is by no means the whole force of St. Paul's exhortation. It is the spirit of the world that he warns the Roman Christians against. The world's fashions alter, but the spirit of the world remains the same. It is this that our Lord speaks of so much and so strongly, that it is at enmity against God, irreconcilable. It is this that St. John describes, under the symbol of Babylon, as living on till the end of all things, and then like Rome overwhelmed with terrible destruction. It is the human spirit that has rebelled against God, that will not be reconciled to God, that does not desire God's interference, but wishes to have the world to itself; that determines above all things to be free, to be its own master. All through the Bible there is the record of God's overtures of peace to the world. He sent His messengers one after another, and the world would not hear them. Last of all He sent His Son; and when He came the angels proclaimed peace and good-will towards men. But when God spoke of peace, the world prepared for battle. God hid His divinity, and displayed only so much of the divine image as human nature could reflect and display; yet the world hated this, conspired against it, and put to death the righteous man, as it seemed, the incarnate God, as it really was. All through those magnificent days of old Rome this spirit of the

world made war upon the disciples of the Son of God. There was toleration for all human religions, but not for God's own religion. The world was fair and beautiful; human life was made as bright and glorious as possible for every one else; but for the servants of God there was nothing too bad—shame, agony, death.

But what is all this to us? Great changes have come about. The world that was laid in ruins by the barbarians has been reconstructed; a new civilisation has been established; marvellous inventions have been made; enormous discoveries; knowledge has taken vast strides; man has advanced so much that we look upon past ages as times of man's infancy—happier probably than these times, brighter, simpler, but evidently vastly inferior in intellectual progress.

What then? Have we outgrown the apostolic doctrine? Is the world converted and amended by its advancement in knowledge, in invention? are St. Paul's words antiquated, superseded to-day? or does he still preach the same message from God, "Be not conformed to this world"? Let us answer this question by asking some others. Did our Lord, or did His Apostles, limit what they said of the world to their own day? Why does the Catholic Church still bid all her children ere they put foot within her threshold "renounce the world"? Has railway travelling, or printing, or scientific discovery, made men moral, honest, pure, godly? Has the vast increase of population, the spread of knowledge, the acquisition of comforts and luxuries, done away with wickedness in any degree? Have modern civilisation and progress cured the selfishness, the cruelty of man's natural heart? Do men and women to-day, with whom we have to do, all live the life of Christ in the world? Is it now right,

or safe, or Christian, to follow the world's ways and fashions, or to accept its principles? Surely not. The world's Bible of to-day is the Press, the teeming, never-ceasing revelation of man's thoughts, man's will, man's opinion, in books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers. You shall find every sort and theory of life enunciated, every sort of act canvassed, and by some applauded. You listen to your teacher, but you get bewildered; for every sort of contradiction is spoken. It is Babel over again. Listen to the voices that call to you and obey them, and you will commit every sort of folly, every sort of crime. You will be led one way to-day, another way to-morrow. You will hear high principles proclaimed by those who practise the lowest and meanest villanies; you will hear black called white, and crooked sworn to be straight. You will hear clever rogues praised and innocent victims ridiculed. You will be told you must do as others do.

“The way of the world; the way of the world!” Men sigh over it, groan over it, curse it; but still it goes on. It is hard to describe it, to put it down in words; but every one knows what it means. You cannot put your finger upon it, for it shifts and wriggles away beneath your touch; you cannot grasp it, for it is subtle as a vapour; you cannot codify it by chapter and verse, for it will not stay to be manipulated. It varies year by year; it is different in different countries; it affects youth and age, sex and position, with special peculiarities. It is scarcely the same for any two individuals; but it is still as ever the enemy of God, and therefore the enemy of man.

To us, then, the apostolic command is addressed, “Be not conformed to this world.” We need it, for there is a

traitor within who would hold parley with the enemy without; who would persuade us that it is no enemy at all. It is easier to open the gates than to continue the defence. It is pleasanter to float down the stream than to toil in rowing against it. The world is attractive; men and women have their good qualities; we often cannot help liking those whom we do not respect, and certainly would not like to imitate. We do not wish to be morose; it is not easy to know where to draw the line; every one is not called to be an ascetic and to go out of the world. Live in the world we must; how may we do this and yet continue to be disciples of Christ?

The Gospels give us the best, the only answer to this question, the only true rule of Christian life in the world. One brief record tells us all we know of the one perfect human life. It tantalises us by its meagreness; we should have been thankful indeed for more details, for some particulars of the life of Jesus at Nazareth as a citizen, as a son, as a working man; what He said and did; how He encountered sin and sinners; how He faced "the way of the world." But, after all, is not the silence full of meaning? Does it not teach all we want to know? What if nothing is recorded because there was really nothing to record? What if His life was a simple life of plain duty steadily fulfilled, of hard honest work, of inoffensive quietness, of unobtrusive kindness, of goodness that rejoiced to hide itself? Yet that life, that human life, that life of a man of like passions with us, that life in the midst of this very world that we live in to-day, was the life of the spotless, sinless Son of God. He lived in the world, yet He was not conformed to it. Let us follow Him; let us take Him for our Lord, our Master, our Guide, our Pattern—a long way off, but as

best we may ; and we shall have learned the great secret of godly life. Let us be His disciples, and we shall never doubt what course to take in the midst of the world's devious ways, which is the true guiding voice among the world's thousand voices ; for thus He prays for us, "These are in the world ; Holy Father, keep those whom Thou hast given Me. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

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#### THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

##### *Breaking Down.*

In the account of the first miraculous draught of fishes, we are told that when they had at last secured what they had so long laboured for in vain, "their net brake." Now why was this? These men were doing what our Lord told them to do ; might we not have expected that they would have been protected from accident? They were the subjects of a miracle ; might we not suppose that the miracle would be thorough and complete, and all its circumstances felicitous? So we should have thought, but so it was not. The draught of fish was miraculous, and yet the net broke ; many of the fish escaped, and were never landed. The boats were filled indeed, but presently they began to sink ; and where was the gain after all? Was our Lord not able to do a perfect work? Was His power limited like ours ; greater indeed, but not infinite? We cannot

believe this. There is doubtless some deep mystery here; some necessity that we cannot understand; some law to which God submits Himself in things human.

Human life is full of riddles and difficulties; thoughtful men in all ages have pondered on them; they have watched their recurrence, and tried to lay down a theory and detect a law, and so perhaps discover a reason and meaning; but it is not easy. Many give up all in anger and vexation, and deny God and His providence; many pass all such things by, and just live in the present, mere higher animals, a better sort of ant, for instance, that toils, and accumulates much, and lays it by safely for some one else, and then dies.

But let us notice some of the many instances that seem to indicate a great law governing human affairs, of which this incident reminds us; not merely imperfection, but a break down after a good beginning; a flaw in something that is otherwise very good. Let us go back to the beginning. Man is created in God's image, and He Himself pronounces him "very good;" but soon there come temptation, fall, ruin. Look at the Flood; look at the history of Israel; look at the Christian Church. Take individuals; all break down somewhere; some finally, all at some point in their history—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David, Solomon, Peter. Let us think of our own acquaintance; what fine characters are almost realised, what noble lives are just missed! That man would be great but for one failing. That man's bodily frame is marred by some taint or blemish. That woman would be quite beautiful but for that one inharmonious feature. See that sweet child, watch it with loving admiration, till presently it revolts you by some rudeness or ill temper. See



faces fair but hearts foul; "a villain with a smiling face, a goodly apple rotten at the core." Or take men's high deeds and purposes, like Horace's mermaid, "a fair woman above, below a foul fish." Read the deeds of the devoted men who began missions and Religious Orders in Christian Europe, and see what came of it all. Let some noble king arise, and do great things for God and man in this poor world, and sooner or later there will surely come disappointment and collapse. Every Arthur will be mated with his Guinevere, to "spoil the purpose of his life." The good ship sails round the world, and then founders in sight of home, and squanders her precious cargo upon the rocks, and flings her more precious crew of stalwart men to rot upon the oozy bottom of the sea.

Now our Lord so truly and completely became man, that He did not exempt Himself and His works from this strange law of failure. He came not to alter these mysterious laws, but to submit to them; not even to explain them, but just to take His place side by side with us, and silently, as if He knew no more than we, to enter into our disappointments and share our failures. He commanded the net to be let down; He compelled the fish to enter. The Creator was there; the Lord of Heaven and earth was exercising His will, His power; and yet in the midst of all "the net brake." We ask why? And though we pause and listen for an answer, there is silence. The ark of God is taken; Jerusalem is destroyed; the Church is brought low. These things are hard to understand, but are they not all written on the same page of holy writ as this brief, pregnant, mysterious record, "Their net brake"? Nay, is there not something deeper, more unintelligible still?

this, "My God, my God ! why hast Thou forsaken me ?" There can be nothing beyond this ; all breaking down, all failures are nothing to this. Our little catastrophes, the collapse of our best hopes, fade into nothingness beside that consummation at Calvary.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter ? What great law of human affairs do we learn from so many instances ? Surely that there is not, and cannot be, anything perfect here ; that sooner or later, first or last, in beginning, midst, or end, there must be a break down. Not only in man's works, but in all God's works in this world, even our dim eyes and our dull senses can discern flaws. How grandly and truly, we say, rolls the earth round the sun ; but science can detect irregularities, nutations, catastrophes. How true the seasons are in their courses ; but there are draughts and blights, excessive heats, rain, or cold. The animal is beautiful, but as we admire it, it springs upon and destroys some other animal beautiful as itself. We are ravished with sunny skies and silver moonlight, but what shall we say of long sunless rain and bitter cold ? The flowers come year by year with the same exquisite painting ; the fruit never forgets its flavour ; but, try as you will, you will scarce find either one or the other without flaw or imperfection. Men think over their past years, and they can scarce fix upon one perfect day ; but hope still tells them a flattering tale, and they look on to some unclouded future.

" Strange cozenage ! none would live past years again,  
Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain,  
And from the dregs of life think to receive  
What the first sprightly running could not give."

What, then ? What does experience teach us ? Cynical despair ? Yes, to the unbeliever ; to the man of the

world ; to the earthly and sensual ; to the man who hath his portion in this life. But what says St. Paul of the teaching of experience ? " Experience worketh hope." What an experience St. Paul had ! He tells us a little of his disappointments, of the hard life he led, of the treatment he received from men, of the wages meted out to him by the Heavenly Master he served ; but this is what it all taught him—hope. Hope deferred generated hope ; hope disappointed, hope crushed, all was turned to hope again by the subtle alchemy of that strong soul. He hoped against hope. Like the rank corn in Egypt, cut down, fed off, trampled down by cattle, his hope sprang up stronger than ever for its ill usage, and bore much fruit.

" If we have hope only in this life, we are of all men most miserable." But we rest not our hopes here ; we anchor our souls beyond the veil ; " we drink of the brook in the way, and lift up the head ;" we sip the sweetness of life, and pass on ; we wrap ourselves tighter as the blasts of trouble beat upon us, and still press on. And what is the ground of our confidence ? The sure word of Him who cannot lie ; promises numberless ; promises boundless ; promises clear and definite ; and promises no less precious because they are veiled and hidden, and must be sought for. For instance, in the time of His humiliation, when He made Himself one with us, even in His miracle, the net brake ; but turn on a few pages ; read the mysterious records of His risen life ; note that once again He bids them throw the net ; once again it is full to overflowing ; but now it does not break ; for the time of flaws and failures is past ; the earnest expectation is realised, the divinely implanted dissatisfaction with the imperfect is justified ; the divine

instinct for the perfect is satiated. "Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land" (to *land*, not to the boat, which presently began to sink, but to the *land*), "full of great fishes ; and for all there were so many, yet was *not the net broken*."

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## FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

### *The Passion of Christ and His Saints.*

The Cross cast its shadow forward, all along the ages of the world, upon men and upon events, from the moment of the Fall. The Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world." The Seed of the woman was promised as soon as the serpent's trail polluted the path of mankind. The Passion was always in the mind of God ; and we, who have the reality, can set it side by side with type and shadow, and discern what former generations could not understand. The Cross and the Passion are found everywhere ; men are types of Christ ; actions adumbrate His ; rites, blindly accepted and performed, suddenly take shape and sense, and preach the Atonement, as light from the Cross flashes back upon them ; prophets, histories, psalms, start into meaning ; the Bible teems with Christ and Him crucified. Even beyond the line of God's direct tradition we can note man's original knowledge and hope of redemption. Heathen sacrifices, wild legends, distorted expectations, all the world over and in every age, we find something to assure us of man's common original and common hope.

If this was so before the Incarnation, before the Cross

bore its Fruit, what wonder that, since the Holy One was lifted up, He has drawn men unto Him? If the shadow could be felt and could heal, what must be the power of the living reality? If Abraham could apprehend that day so long before, and after him a long line of men of faith could rejoice in what they waited for but never saw, what wonder that there has been an unfailing succession of those who "determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"? As He walked in Galilee, He called whom He would, and they obeyed, much as Abraham of old obeyed, not knowing whither they went. This man and that man He called, and they arose and followed Him. They were ignorant men; they were not morally or intellectually great, but He took them as they were, and educated them. They had but one book and one lesson, Himself. They were dull scholars, slow at learning, but He had called them, knowing what He did, and by and by they became living pictures of Himself. The world discerned His features in them, His life, His words, His spirit; they became so many Christs; and then He sent them out into the world, as He had Himself been sent; and so they were called "Apostles." He called them from their trades and homes, and bade them follow Him; and they followed Him, amazed, and said sometimes, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" They thought He was leading them to a throne; they found He was leading them to the Cross. Human nature was still strong; they all wavered; one drew back to perdition. That Passover was a dark and bitter time for the first called, but the night of heaviness passed, and joy came with Easter morning, and at Pentecost more light, more power, from the crucified, risen, ascended Master. Then they understood who had called them, why they were called, to

what they were called ; and they passionately embraced the Passion, and went forth into the world to teach it, to display it, to experience it, to hand it on with dying hands to other hands stretched out eagerly to accept and embrace the trust.

So it has gone on ; the succession has never failed. Just as it was before He came, typical man and typical event displayed this or that feature of Christ, this or that part of the Passion, so since Bethlehem and Calvary the "called" have reflected this or that ray of light from the Cross, this or that radiance from the infinite phases of the Passion. Martyrs have caught and handed on the ruddy hues of the Five Wounds ; unknown sufferers have perpetuated the tradition of His unrecorded endurance ; lonely hearts have experienced His desolation when men and God seemed to have forsaken Him ; brave men-lovers have sacrificed their own lives after His example ; His silent patience, His prayer for His murderers, His trust in God in darkness, His unconquerable love to the last for His own, these and all other incidents of the Passion have been repeated with more or less exactness in the lives of those whom He has called. His Passion in its ineffable superabundant bitterness has taken away the bitterness of the sufferings of His called. The Acts of the Martyrs assure us that often they did not even feel their cruel tortures ; like the Three Children in the furnace, they were unhurt, because there was a Fourth with them ; and often since, in more commonplace sufferings, there has been marvellous help from the Passion. Weak women have been strangely sustained ; cruel diseases have gnawed at scarcely sensible nerves ; agonising mental tortures have been sustained beyond all comprehension. The Passion explains all. The Passion

had wasteful redundancy ; ten thousand-fold less would have redeemed the world.

The superabundance has been the exhaustless treasury for blessing, mitigating, sanctifying all Christian suffering since. Unite your pains, O sufferer, with the pains of the Passion ; join your trouble to the Passion, they will be easier to bear at once. Why were you born in these times ? Why not among the Assyrians, or Greeks, or Romans ? Why not among the Israelites ? Because you were "called" to follow Christ in His Passion. The world has a new aspect since the Passion. The ills of life have an explanation, a reason. This world is not our home. We are called to follow Christ, and partake of His Cross and Passion, that we may reign with Him, as no others can who lived before Him, however good they may have been. God's will is absolute, and He has called whom He will. Let us not lose the honour and dignity of our calling, "Lord, I will follow Thee, *but*"—let there be no reservation. It must be all, or none. Let our first question be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" and then our life-work, the doing it. There are some sufferings of Christ yet to be filled up, and some of them are to be *our* lot ; for this we were "called."

There is an old legend that when the poor rough peasants of Nazareth were sad and in trouble, they would say, "Let us go and see Mary's Son ;" and as they watched Him, and talked to Him, peace and patience grew in their hearts. Let us, too, very often make visits to Mary's Son. Let us get to know Him better, to be on familiar terms with Him ; not merely formal visits of duty, not hasty prayers, in and out of His presence in no time ; but long, loving, meditative visits, sitting before Him like Mary of Bethany, till His presence saturates

the soul; pondering His words in the heart like His Mother.

It is said that the difference between a genius and an ordinary man, is not so much in mental power, as in power of continued attention; the subject is thought out; it is fully grasped, and its consequences are perceived. So a saint is a man who has learned more of Christ than ordinary Christians. It is said that the man of one book is always a remarkable man; and the Passion is an inexhaustible book, in which men have read, and read, yet never come to the end, never wearied. "What is the breadth of literature, but distraction from God? what are material prosperities, but a slavery of increasing wants, increasingly dissatisfied?" The Passion will teach us how to live, and how to die. It will tell us how to use and understand the world; it will unriddle hard questions; make mazes clear; it will reveal God to us; for when we open our eyes in the eternal world, the first sight that we shall behold, will be our Lord, bearing still the Five Wounds of the Passion.

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### SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

#### *Christ the Restorer.*

Our Lord's mission was essentially a mission of revival. The prophets are full of symbols which indicate such a characteristic as belonging to the work of the coming Messiah. Isaiah speaks of a tree that has been destroyed to the very ground, and promises that a tender shoot shall spring from it, till it grows great. Amos takes his



parable from the closely-cut grass, which the rain will make to spring again, thick, green, luxuriant. Ezekiel has a vision of dry bones, that are wonderfully revived. Elsewhere it is the smouldering fire that still lingers in the torch, which He is said to urge into flame. The same idea may be found in many other places under various similitudes. Job in his desolation longed for such a Saviour, whom he seems to have more clearly seen afterwards; he says, "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet, through the scent of water, it will bud, and bring forth boughs, like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? If a man die, shall he live again?"

The shadow of death, that lowered over man, and all he did, ever since he brought upon himself the threatened curse, "Thou shalt surely die;" this, Christ the light of the world, came to drive away. He, the Life, came to be death's death; He, the good Samaritan, came to recall to life the dying, but not yet dead, image of God, robbed, wounded, but whose life was still in him. The great kings and conquerors, who had gone before Him, and who called themselves, and whom men accepted as "benefactors," were but thieves and robbers; they could but destroy; but He came that men might have life. He seemed always to lay hold upon that which was good in man, that He might make it better. The inquiring Scribe He encouraged, by telling him that he was "not far from the kingdom of God." If He worked miracles of healing, He made the faith of the sufferer the pivot upon which all turned; or He took

the little lad's poor, inadequate store of five loaves, and made it the germ and foundation of His bounty; or the water that they had, to give them the wine they had not.

If He must needs upbraid, He will not break the bruised reed by harshness; He fans up the smoking flax. When Peter had thrice denied, He only alludes to it by thrice asking, whether he loved Him. Love was Peter's strong point; it was the smoking flax when all else had gone out, and stank. Upon this then His Lord dwells; here He rests the foundation of repentance for the past, and amendment for the future.

And such is His policy still. His Spirit strives with our spirit, especially where it is naturally best disposed towards Him, and His will and ways. It is no part of Christianity to crush out the sweet things of nature. All the highest graces of the saint are rudimentary in every one of us; they were not creations in them, but only luxuriant natural growth, wonderfully developed by the great grace of God faithfully and constantly used. We shall get on most rapidly, if we cultivate those good things, which are already most advanced in us.

Many a hideously fallen man or woman has been reclaimed, because it was lovingly shown them that there was still some good left in them. If hope can be kindled, faith will follow, and love will not be far off. If it be proved to me that I am hopelessly bad; what remains for me but desperation? But if the Good Physician smiles upon me, and tells me, that while there is life there is hope, and withal pours in oil and wine to help nature; if the Good Shepherd find me strayed, wearied, entangled in wounding thorns, and yet is ready to free me, though He tear His Hands; and to bear me

home, though it weary Him ; if the Good Father meet me, a returning prodigal, with pity and loving, longing arms, what can I do but burst into penitential tears, at the sight of such love, and under the reaction that hope works within me ? What can I do but fall on my knees, and sob out all the bitter shameful confession ; and promise from the very bottom of my heart, never more to outrage such love ? And what is this, but conversion ?

What do we not owe to this merciful attribute of our Lord, that He will not quench the smoking flax ? What poor creatures do we know ourselves to be as He sees us ? What would become of the very best of us if He had a sterner rule of discipline and retribution with us ? Let us then both take courage, and be stirred up to fresh energy by the knowledge of this, His way with us. We know not what we may become by the grace of God ; we know not what glory may come to God, what good to others, what exceeding joy to ourselves, if only we are true to this principle of going on in the way that seems nearest and most fitting for us.

The poor little wild flowers and fruits may, we know, be cultivated and developed into splendour and lusciousness by the skill of man ; and the poor smoking flax of natural gifts and goodness may be fanned into a flame that shall shine before men to the glory of our Father in heaven. A plain face will sometimes be strangely transformed and beautified under strong emotion ; and we, with our homely talents, may, by God's grace, rise nearer to God than seems now possible. Good temper, kindness, a generous disposition, love of truth, innocence, a gentle manner, and all the other admirable qualities that mere human nature can display, how much may be done with

these by the grace of God! Knowledge, skill, rank, wealth; yes, even beauty and gracefulness, may not even these be sanctified and made blessings, and developed into things higher and more precious, and that cannot fade away? It is to him that hath, that more shall be given. All that we have is God's gift to us; given, that through it He may give us more.

We read that, before our Lord would feed that hungry, fainting crowd by miracle, He said to His disciples, "How many loaves have ye?" and it was the little stock they had that He blessed and multiplied, not some newly created food. When of old God's prophet would repay the poor widow for her hospitality, he first asked what she already had; she was poor, she scarce knew what to answer, till she thought of a pot of oil; and this the prophet took, blessed, and multiplied as long as she could find vessels to hold it. It is so still; the poorest, the youngest, the least among us has something already. There is something good in every one of us; and God is ready and willing to bless and to multiply it. Through Him it is that we had it at all; through Him it is that we have preserved it hitherto; through Him "the little one may become a thousand." No estimate can be too humble of our own goodness; and yet we have, each one of us, our place in God's providence. He has called us into being; we are necessary for some work of His. He does not despise us, whatever the world may think of us. If we are true to ourselves, and to Him, there is that in us which He can and will make blessed in its proper place in His eternal kingdom.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

*Personal Contact with Christ.*

The whole Bible preaches Christ. Men are types of Him; events symbolised His work. Such is the record of Elisha's raising the Shunammite's son. It contains a miniature representation of God's wonderful work in the redemption and restoration of fallen man by Jesus Christ. Then Elisha's act was more than fulfilled. Man lay dead, but the Living and life-giving Body of the Incarnate God was applied to him, "mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands," every part to every part, and so every part of man that had been corrupted and deadened by the Fall, and was fast going to corruption, was warmed again into life and health by the touch a second time of Him who gave it life at first. Elisha must have drawn up and contracted his man's stature to adapt it to the stature of the dead child; so, and much more, did Christ humble Himself to be a man, a poor man, a little child; so did He empty Himself and hide His divinity and stooped so very low, making Himself one of us, sanctifying every period of human life, every condition, every relation, by His personal contact with all; yea, laying Himself down in the grave, side by side with the dead, that our mortal bodies might be quickened from death by His spiritual and divine Body.

In each case, too, God's work is secret and hidden. Elisha "shut the door upon them twain" before he began his work. And the work of redemption was in every sense a hidden work. There was a proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet there God

became man, and it was the very "lowliness of His handmaiden" that was one of the characteristics of Mary that fitted her in the sight of God for her tremendous destiny. Then how hidden was the Nativity! how hidden the true character of the Death and Atonement of Christ, so that men are still questioning and doubting about them, because they are so shrouded in secrecy.

This Old Testament miracle then points to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the redemption of man. But there is more in it than this. All that was done once for mankind at large is done over and over again for each soul that is made partaker of Christ's atonement and righteousness. It is not enough that Christ should die for the world, He must be brought near to each soul, "mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands;" and by that personal, individual contact, drive away the death of sin, and quicken the life of righteousness. This is a truth that many forget, and that many are actually ignorant of. They have a sort of faith in the Atonement of Christ for the sins of the world, but they have never individually laid hold of Christ themselves. They come to church, but their individual soul never lifts itself up to God, never joins itself to Him; and they go away as they came, unwarmed, unblessed, with no new gift of life and grace from the contact of "mouth with mouth, eyes with eyes, hands with hands." They have never been led by Christ away from the multitude as He led away the blind man to whom He gave sight. He has never gone into His inner chamber with their dead soul and "shut the door upon them twain." He has never come so close that His warm divine touch has kindled the dead stony heart into a living, throbbing heart of flesh. No; they have kept their Lord at arm's length; they

have even, like the Gadarenes, besought Him to depart from them. He has knocked at their door, but they would not open. He was willing, but they "knew not the day of their visitation;" and He could not save them against their will without their consent, their desire, their co-operation. He sighed over the deaf man, but him He could heal; over them He can but weep, as He wept over Jerusalem, for He can do nothing against dead faithlessness. Man must do his part; each must do his own appointed work, or God cannot save that soul.

What is to be done then for such? Their fellow-men who see what they do not see, and hear and feel what they do not hear and feel, must act for them. This incident tells us how; the child was dead, his father had no hope, saw nothing that could be done, but the mother sped away to the man of God, hotly, eagerly, painfully. "She said to her servant, Drive and go forward, slack not thy riding for me;" and so all through the burning sunshine, all along the dusty way, she hurried on, till she came breathless and faint to Carmel; there she presses on till she finds Elisha, and thrusts herself at once and unbidden into his presence, throws herself at his feet and clings there convulsively, in spite of Gehazi's indignant efforts to thrust her away. Thus the child, that was all the while lying helpless, was helped by the tender mighty love of his mother, and was saved beyond all hope by her faith and energy.

It was so in many of the Gospel miracles; for example, the deaf mute could do little for himself; but his friends could hear and speak, and they brought him to Jesus. They spoke for him; and so he gained the blessing: the paralytic lay helpless, but four strong friends carried him to the housetop, and having opened the roof, let him

down before Jesus ; the daughter of Jairus was dead, but a father's love and intercession brought Him to her bedside who could give her life again. Do we not know how much we can and must do for one another in everyday life, in temporal matters, in the needs and requirements of the body ? Why then should we doubt that we can and must help each other in spiritual matters ? Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus ; Andrew brought Peter ; so it has always been, and it must always be. If we have found Jesus ourselves, we shall try and bring others to Him. Nay, we may be sure that we have not found Him, unless we have this proselyting spirit, this desire to save souls, this spirit of Jesus Christ without which we are none of His. We shall not be able to refrain from doing something at home or abroad for the good of others ; some work of mercy or reclamation, something to save the lost, to help the suffering, to raise the fallen. Such work is not the duty of the clergy only, nor of those only who have leisure, or means, or special opportunity ; no, it is the duty of every one that is called a Christian. There is some deaf and dumb soul near each one of us ; we must try and bring it to the healing touch of Jesus. There is some dead soul not far from every one of us ; it will go to corruption, unless we hasten to the Man of God, that He may come and save it. What can we do ? If we can do nothing else, we can pray. If we cannot really work ourselves, we can help all good works and all earnest workers who are trying to save some. Ay, and if we are not doing this, we have but a poor chance of salvation ourselves ; we are perhaps even lying dead and cold ourselves, sorely needing that some one pray for us, that a man of God may revive our dead heart, and put a little of the fire of the love of God into it.



Yes, there is much to be done in the heart of many of us; and One only can do it; and He must do it in His own way; it can be done in no other. What is good for others may not be good for us. The Good Physician must be personally seen and consulted. There is no universal remedy; there is no self-doctoring. We may spend all on physicians and be no better but rather grow worse. He must lead thee, O soul, all alone out of the multitude, His fingers must be put into thy ears and touch thy tongue. He must come into the chamber with thee alone; all, however near, and dear, and loving, and anxious, all shut out; and He must "shut the door upon you twain," Him and thee. What do we know of this? Has not our religion been a vague general going with the multitude? Do not some feel that it has never been a real thing to us, a personal matter between Christ and our soul? When Joseph would make himself known to his brethren, he bade all other men depart, and "there stood no man with them, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren." What does this mean but that Christ and the soul must be alone together, face to face, when each is made known to the other? When our Lord would raise the dead child, "He put all forth." His ways change not; the spiritually dead must still be alone with Him, and the world be shut out, that they may be raised to life. Is not this just what we want? we have never been face to face with Him and let Him do what He would with us; show us each sin, judge, condemn us, receive our penitent confession of each sin, hear our self-condemnation, our vow of amendment, our deep cry for pardon; and then felt His absolving hand, heard His forgiving word, and gone on our way rejoicing. Christ still complains as of old, "Ye will not come to

Me that ye may have life." Anything that brings Christ and the soul near together is distasteful and is avoided ; prayer, the services of the Church ; above all, the Holy Communion. For this brings us nearest of all to God ; this, therefore, the impenitent, unpardoned soul shrinks from above all. It is self-condemned ; it passes judgment upon itself justly ; it makes excuses and keeps away. Not so the penitent ; not so the quickened soul ; " Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee ;" this is its instinct ; for love draws us near to those whom we love, and our being near them makes us love them more. " Wash me more and more from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin ;" " not my feet only, but also my hands and my head ;" let every member be conformed to the corresponding member of Thine all-pure nature ; " mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands ;" my mouth that I may speak Thy words only, " that I offend not in my tongue ;" my eyes, that I may be quick to see Thee, and be " guided by Thine eye," and blind to all that would turn my soul from Thee ; my hands, that I may work for Thee, that I may be restrained from evil-doing, that my hands may be clean, ever held up in supplication, ever ready to receive Thy gifts and use them to Thy glory and the good of others and myself.

Yes, this is the life of the soul that clings to Christ ; and as it clings its flesh waxes warm ; the life of Christ, the fire that He came upon earth to kindle, these are communicated from Him to the soul that touches Him. For if the very shadow of Peter passing by healed the sickness of those who lay upon beds and couches in the street, what must be the power for healing and life of the very Body of Christ itself brought near to and joined to every part of the Christian ! If the touch of the hem

of His garment healed incurable disease, what must it be to be joined to Him, "mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands;" nay, to be made one with Him, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh? In the days of His humiliation there went out virtue from Him, and healed all that came to Him; what then will He not do now in the day of His glory and power for all that need, for all that come to Him with faith and penitence, really in earnest, seeking Him with their whole heart?

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#### MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

##### *Cheerfulness a Characteristic of Christians.*

It is related of an eminent servant of God, that being asked what were the chief characteristics of the Christian religion, he said they were three; that the first was cheerfulness, the second cheerfulness, and the third cheerfulness. It was doubtless his own experience, both in himself and in other religious persons, that led him to this conclusion; and endless testimony might be brought to confirm it. Yet, on the other hand, is it not the alleged gloominess of religion that deters many from it? It was one of the charges brought against Christianity in the early ages, that it made men gloomy despisers of all the joys of life.

Now we have here two entirely opposite accounts given of religion, one from within, the other from without; which is the true account? To go back to the first adversaries of Christianity in primitive times, the same persons who alleged that it was a gloomy

superstition declared that Christians were atheists, and that they practised horrible profanities and impurities at their meetings. Now we are quite sure that these latter charges were untrue; we have good ground then to infer that the former allegation was also unfounded. At the very time that these things were asserted by those who knew nothing of Christians, except what hostile gossip imagined, we have authentic records of the rule of life, and of the actual practice of these men. We find them practising all the virtues that man has ever praised; and it is especially recorded of them that they passed their time "in gladness," and that, too, not only in the face of the ordinary ills of life, which many find so irksome and hard to bear; but under the weight of suspicion and proscription, contempt and often cruel persecution. Instances are given of apostles rejoicing because they were suffering for their Lord. We read of them singing praises in the night, while they lay in a miserable Roman dungeon, chained, and bleeding from the wounds of the scourge. We go on and we find men and women giving up all the common pleasures and attractions of life, and retiring into houses where they live by evangelical rule; and with one voice they proclaim their happiness. The names they give to their places of retreat, which worldly people regard with horror as prisons of gloomy misery, are significant.<sup>1</sup> They speak of their adopted homes uniformly with affection and gladness; and unprejudiced visitors from without are agreed as to the invariable cheerfulness of those within. If we begin to think of it dispassionately, and recall to mind persons whom we have known, or

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<sup>1</sup> See Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, vol. i. p. 66.

heard of, or read of, who were really good Christians, earnest, consistent, it certainly does strike us that they were generally cheerful people; certainly not gloomy or miserable; and that too very often in spite of heavy trials and afflictions.

There seems then to be a stream of evidence, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles down to our own personal experience, that Christian men and women are cheerful and happy, and that too in proportion to their consistent fulfilment of their Master's precepts.

Children naturally resist restraint; their desire is to do the thought of the moment, without rule or order or end; and yet even children weary of liberty, and the play that comes after lessons is the heartiest and most enjoyed. There are not a few men and women, even those whose grey hairs tell of declining years, who have never outgrown those wild childish ignorances; who are but children still in all but innocence, and who still conceive that happiness is to be found in lawless unrestraint, in idle self-indulgence, in obedience to none but their own wilful will. This is their ideal life, this their dream of mundane happiness.

But if we look at those who actually pass this sort of life, can it be said of them, as we have seen it said of consistent Christians, that they are generally cheerful? Do not the men yawn through life, always wearied? Do not the women vex themselves and one another with petty contests and envious rivalries, and try and hide sore hearts and bitter thoughts under fine clothes and forced smiles? What are the sensual and worldly after all but poorest imitators of that most favoured of sensualists, Solomon? and if he, with all his unapproachable advantages, declared the whole thing a failure and dis-

appointment, what can these poor puny copyists hope to do?

Yes, liberty is dear to man, and it is his indefeasible right; but his wisest use of liberty is to subject himself to rule; and the one rule that is perfect freedom, is the rule of Jesus Christ. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Why do truly Christian men and women seem cheerful? Do they put it on? Have generations of Christians all agreed one after another to lie and pretend? Have they all hit upon the same idea? Have they succeeded in deceiving all observers, many of them unfriendly? It is surely harder to believe all this, than simply to say, that Christian people seem to be cheerful, because they are cheerful; and that when they say that religion makes them so, they ought to be believed.

But then whence comes the opposite opinion, so widely entertained? and if it is unfounded, how is its existence to be explained?

There are two or three answers. This opinion, as we have seen, is held by enemies, or half friends only. We know that the wish is often father to the thought; these persons dislike religion, and want to find arguments against it, and so gladly lay hold of this among others.

Then there is an element of truth in it, as there is in all errors, or they could not live. Christ does lay a yoke and burden upon His followers. As seen from the outside, religion has a forbidding aspect; like many good and wholesome and precious things, there is a rough, unpromising outside husk, which is not merely ugly, but hurts inexperienced and timid hands.

Then there are hypocrites and apostates, and crotchety and fanatical people, and the world makes much

of these cases, and persuades itself that they are the rule, not the exception. Then there is the straightforward answer that the statement is a plain and downright lie, taught by the father of lies.

Read the Gospels, and see what the world said of Jesus Christ: He was called glutton and drunkard; it was said that He companied with the vilest of both sexes from choice; He was condemned to death as a leader of sedition. As the Master was, so must His servants be; lying has all along done the devil's work well in opposition to the Church and the Gospel; it is doing it still, and will do it to the end.

Let us take this for certain then, that the religion of Jesus Christ makes men happy and cheerful in spite of its restraints, in spite of its Lents and rules and prohibitions. For let us not deny that there are such. The religion of Jesus Christ does lay its yoke and burden upon us, only they are not grievous when bravely taken up. It promises happiness only in the world to come, but it is better than its word, and gives present happiness too, even when it leads to pains and losses and death itself.

Do we not know this, we who, however poorly it may be, do try to live Christian lives? Do we not see this very clearly, that if we were better Christians, if we lived by a higher standard, we should be happier still; that it is not our religion, but the want of more of it, that holds us down and mars our cheerfulness? Do we not know, whether from our own experience or that of others, that a great many troubles are the direct result of sin? Has not the godly man one more source of happiness than the man of the world, and one that never fails him? Does he not know in his own experience what those

words of our Lord mean, " My peace I leave with you ; " and those others, " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest to your souls ; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light ? "

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## TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

### *Hearing Music and Hearing Sermons.*

A Greek legend tells us that there was a certain daughter of Priam, King of Troy, named Cassandra, to whom Apollo, in admiration of her beauty, gave the power of foretelling future events, but that afterwards, being angry with her, he nullified his endowment by ordaining that no one should believe anything that she uttered. Like most legends, this doubtless expresses what human experience has found to be true. There is an unhappy facility among mankind for doing the wrong thing, for rejecting truth with suspicion and accepting falsehood with avidity. Cynical philosophers and men who have seen a good deal of the worst side of human nature, tell us with a sneer that the world is peopled with knaves and fools, and that the latter are the more numerous. Ordinary experience tells most men that there are a great many men and women who cannot be classed with either of these, but we may still wonder and lament that in spite of all the wisdom that is offered to the acceptance of the world, so many people live and die with so little of it in their own possession. After all these centuries of



human life, men still commit the same mistakes, are guilty of the same follies, and waste their lives and ruin their happiness, just as people did ages ago.

All teachers complain that their good advice is very often disregarded. The first of the series of human teachers is the mother; and mothers find even in very little children a wayward, wilful disobedience that spoils much of their good work. The father tells his son going out into the world, that he has been exactly in his position, depicts to him just what sort of dangers he will meet with, and advises him to take a course that will enable him to avoid making mistakes; but the son's passions often overcome good reasons, or his pride makes him fancy he knows better than his elders, or he thinks he will be able to evade the evil consequences of evil acts, and that he will have better luck than other people. The same unfortunate rule holds good as regards the teachers of bodies of men. Statesmen, and others in authority, find their wise and sound policy hindered, and measures which they know to be unsound and injurious advocated and finally adopted. In a great community there are wheels within wheels; there are so many interests, so many motives, so many influences, that what is right and true and just and best is not necessarily accepted. The guileless youth, when he first encounters this, is astonished and struck dumb; he has been taught that truth is to be sought and held fast, that there must be no sacrifice of principle, that what is right must be done at all hazards; and when he sees the world's devious ways, the give-and-take principle that even good men allow, he scarcely knows how to act, how to square his principles with his conduct, and he vents his feelings of disgust in hot and unmeasured denunciations.

Our Lord commends this spirit of the child, and holds it up as a model to His disciples, the ingenuous virgin eye that looks out straight upon things as they are, the innocent, unsullied soul that has not been perverted and debased by the knowledge of and the contact with evil, the heroic unselfishness that stands for what is right at all costs, and has no sinister motives, no unconfessed intentions.

Look at the record of men who have spoken for God in all ages, and there appears a sort of family likeness in them all; every one of these features is discernible in their character, though the proportion of their relative development may vary. From the days of Noah to the present moment, the preacher of righteousness is alternately astonished and indignant that his message is disregarded. Even our Lord Himself shared these feelings, "If I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" "He marvelled at their unbelief and hardness of heart." Moses, Samuel, Jonah, Elijah, Ezekiel, St. Paul, all complain in the same way. A man with artistic taste is horrified to see hideous daubs honoured with a place upon the walls of houses, whose owners, however, like them. The European is disgusted with the tastes and fashions of the African. The ear that is true and sensitive cannot understand how people can sing out of tune, for it suffers acute pain at the sound of discord. So the Christian teacher in church and school is amazed and saddened at his want of success in commending what he himself holds so dear, to the hearts of his hearers. Many keep out of earshot altogether; some mock and contradict and blaspheme; but some listen and applaud, are interested and moved, and yet what they hear makes no impression upon their life and conduct. Like Herod they fetch John out of prison, and hear him

gladly time after time, but when he has finished, they send him back to prison again ; and by and by a day comes, and they cut off his head. Like Felix they are fascinated by the eloquence and earnestness, and even by the terrible judgments denounced upon them by St. Paul, but time passes, circumstances compel, Felix gets a new appointment, and St. Paul is left unheeded in his jail. Ezekiel preaches, and the people come and hear him with interest and attention, but somehow his advice is not followed, his warnings are not heeded, his hearers make no change whatever in their life and practice ; and when he is indignant at all this and complains to Him who sent him, the voice replies in explanation or in sympathy, "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument."

We can see the force and aptness of this comparison. Music has almost universal power and attraction. Those men are few who do not feel its influences and delight in its inspirations. It is thought to be evidence of a deficiency not merely in taste but in morality if music is not appreciated. "The man that hath no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night, and his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted." People flock to hear music, they sit silent and charmed as they listen, they are moved to smiles, to enthusiasm, to dancing, to tears, according to the character of the melody that is performed ; but when it is over—well, it is over ! Those who hear do not go immediately and perform what they have listened to and enjoyed ; they never think of doing this. Is it not so with those who hear noble truths and

high principles enunciated? At the moment they are moved; every one feels himself a hero; every one has the aspirations of a saint; but the whole thing ends with the discourse, and the hearer drops at once into the prosaic matter-of-fact routine of the ordinary life of ordinary people. People think these things ought to be said by the clergy, and when they have heard them, they think they have done their part, and so there is an end of the matter. If the preacher of great truths be eloquent and gifted, then the danger is yet greater. People rush in crowds to have their itching ears tickled, and they come away delighted, but they do not fall on their knees and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" nor forsake bad habits and say, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." It is said of music—

There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,  
And as the mind is pitched, the ear is pleased  
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave;  
Some chord in unison with what we hear  
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.

So there is in souls a sympathy with truth. Even careless and wicked men assent to high and holy sentiments, but they do not reform their lives. In theatres noble deeds are always applauded, and tender words bring tears to many eyes, but it takes something more than this to convert men's hearts, and turn them from evil to good.

The truths of Christianity are full of beauty; the promises are full of comfort; the love and mercy of God; the death and mediation of Christ; the Christian graces as displayed in the lives and deaths of godly people; these are all most attractive subjects, and even the warnings and threatenings of Scripture, and the terrible

example of reprobate sinners have a certain sort of fascination, especially when dressed out with skill and spoken of with eloquent words which do not come home too close to the conscience of the hearers. Then there are controversies and party questions ; it is delightful to hear our opponents vilified, and the faults of other people shown up ; it makes us feel so virtuous by comparison !

But all this is not religion. To keep the heart pure, the life blameless, to grow in likeness to Christ, and in meetness for the presence of God ; how very different is this from the mere assent to beautiful sentiments heard with the ear !

There was a Latin saying, " *Musice vivit*," "he lives musically," which was used of those who led careless, easy, voluptuous lives. Those who come regularly to church get so used to and familiar with Gospel truths that they take it as a matter of course that they have accepted them in their hearts. As we listen to some well-known air, every note seems familiar, yet presently if we try to repeat it ourselves, we shall probably break down somewhere. So people hear of repentance so often that they take it for granted that they have repented ; they cannot for a moment imagine that with all their knowledge of right they can be going wrong. Yet it may very easily be so ; it is so in a great many instances. The first time we are near a chiming clock, we notice every sound, we follow each note ; but it soon ceases to attract our attention. So it was that the publicans and harlots repented when they came fresh to the preaching of the Baptist, while the Pharisees were unmoved.

Music then may well be taken as a type of revealed

truth; both are lovely, attractive to human instincts; both are powerful to move to smiles or tears; both may be perverted to wrong purposes, and prostituted to unworthy uses; but also both are based upon strictest laws that will not tolerate any divergence. A string of given length, thickness, and tension gives a note according to the number of its vibrations with absolute certainty. Music is capable of profound mathematical calculation, and yet it produces the most powerful influence upon the affections. The mysterious and unalterable laws and properties of numbers which are found pervading all creation from the mingling of gases to the poisoning of systems of suns and planets, these laws exist in music and are the origin of its sweet melodies and harmonies. If they are broken, discord and hideous noises arise. Music with its "soft, voluptuous swell," or with its tripping measures, seems the lightest, freest, most wanton of arts; yet in truth it owes its very existence to strictest obedience to the severest rules which admit of no exceptions. So the sweet hopes of salvation cannot be dissociated from the terrors of threatened judgment. The gentle Saviour who died upon the Cross for love of man must also be the terrible Judge of impenitent sinners; He who says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden," says also, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

There is music, we are told, in heaven; here there is "the song of him that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;" some hear it and forget it; but some hear it unwearied over and over again,

As for some dear familiar strain  
Untired we ask, and ask again.

They hear it, and learn it unconsciously ; and when they pass "beyond these voices," they find that they have learned that new song that no man can learn but here on earth, which goes up evermore before the throne of God from the multitude that no man can number, who were redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb.

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### WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

#### *How to Use the World's Favour.*

Human life is a problem difficult to understand. Theories are formed, but they will not account for all its various phases. They square very well with some of its aspects and circumstances, but when placed side by side with much that occurs, they are seen to be too wide, or too narrow. Something happens sooner or later that cannot be reconciled with the system that has been elaborated ; and baffled philosophy very often ends in indifference and stolid nescience, whose creed is, "I do not know, and I do not care."

The old Paganism believed in the government of the world by the gods, propitiated their wrath by sacrifices, and solicited their favour by prayer ; but the anomalies of human experience, the unequal distribution of good and evil, the misfortunes of the virtuous and the success of the wicked, led many to believe that the gods were indifferent to prayer and to the fate of the human race generally ; so the Epicurean system arose, which taught that we had better do as well as we could for ourselves,

for we need not expect help or sympathy from the higher powers. The Stoical school believed in some inscrutable system of fate which held sway over gods and men ; they said therefore that true manliness must bravely endure what no power could avert or mitigate. The Semitic nations held generally that virtue was blessed and vice punished, but they were continually scandalised by exceptions that contradicted this simple theory ; and, as in the case of Job, they rebelled against the apparent injustice that loaded the godly with misfortunes, while the immoral lived on unscathed by righteous vengeance. Another Oriental system tried to get over the difficulty by imagining that the same soul passed through several states of existence, and that trials and pains that could not be accounted for in any other way, were the penalties endured for sins in a former life ; while a great teacher, whose theory has still vast multitudes of followers, came to the conclusion that human life was a misfortune, that its ills were incurable, and that the only good to be desired was the extinction of individuality and the absorption of the soul in the primal and universal Deity.

Our own day sees another theory of human life, taken up, like most of the others, because of the conflicting difficulties that beset all other theories, and arising out of the marvellous progress of physical science. We are told that man is but a part of the material universe, not merely akin to the beasts, the herbs, and the rocks, but arisen like them, by the operation of irresistible laws, from some rudimentary condition ; for a few years the sport of those blind laws, and then extinguished by them, and coming absolutely to an end.

Different as all these theories and systems are, there is



one feature discernible in them all, the despair that each one evidences. Each dwells upon the ills of human life, and angrily resents them, sullenly submitting, hopeless of any ultimate good. Better surely than all these is the Christian system. It does not deny the difficulties, the anomalies, the hard cases; it accepts much that every other system teaches; it finds truth in all; but it substitutes hope for despair; it magnifies the greatness, and insists upon the goodness of God; it teaches, moreover, that man is very small, very insignificant; that he has neither the power nor the right to understand all the ways and the thoughts of his Maker; that it is his wisdom, as it is his obvious duty, to submit where he cannot understand; and that when he is compelled to say, "I do not know," he shall say also, "Lord, Thou knowest."

Christianity tells us that the great, wonderful, and inscrutable God is not only our Creator and Master, with absolute rights over us as the helpless creatures of His Hand, but that He is our Father, that He loves us with a deep marvellous love, that He has shown this by coming into this world, living among us, experiencing all life's agonies, and many of life's joys; and that to redeem us from the consequences of our individual sins, from the primeval guilt of our race, and from the terrible retributive action of His own unalterable laws, He Himself has paid the penalty of all, enduring death that we might live.

History tells us how this revelation, that shed so much light upon human life, was received; how gladly the ignorant threw away their idols, and the wise their books; what mighty things this new theory of God and man, of life and death, wrought in men's hearts, and in the world

at large. It was so precious, that men and women gave up their lives rather than deny it; it won its way in spite of persecution, in spite of prejudice, in spite of the mighty power of custom, which makes men hold to what is old and well known so tenaciously, even when something better is offered to them. It changed men's hearts; it developed all the noble and sweet qualities that ignorance and error had dwarfed and stunted in human nature; it made love the motive of worship, instead of fear; it made hope the motto of life, instead of despair; it told the poor and suffering that there was a better life to look for; it shed a radiance about the dark cold grave, and declared that each soul was precious to its Creator, its Father, its Redeemer.

But these very gifts of light are now made by some objections against the religion of Christ. It so concerns itself, they say, with the future, that it neglects the present; it promises much in another world, but it leaves the ills of this life unremedied. It has a suspicious look, as if the rulers of the world and those who enjoy this world's good things, had contrived a clever theory by which they might persuade the poor and miserable to be patient under their lot, and so to leave their more fortunate "betters" in quiet and undisturbed possession of everything that makes life worth having.

But who founded this system? Was it the great, the rich, the mighty, the happy? Was it not a poor working-man, a man of sorrows, too, who had little of the good things of the world, except His life, and that the world took from Him? His first disciples were like Him. Christianity sprang from the bosom of the people; it was not invented in courts or schools of philosophy. In its purity it is still the people's religion, exalting the humble, abasing the great.

When it is fairly exhibited, it mitigates all the evils of the world ; it has invented all sorts of aids and helps to meet the misfortunes and the miseries of human life. The perversity of man, the selfishness of the unregenerated heart, the mighty power of the world, which still exists as the hereditary enemy of God, these hold back the gentle hands of the Church, and prevent much, and mar more of her good work. But she ought not to be blamed for this. The religion of Jesus Christ is surely not responsible for the evil it tries to cure ; and can, and would cure, if it were not hindered.

It was said in the first age of Christianity, that its principles were misanthropic ; it has been said since that it teaches men to turn this life into misery in order to gain happiness hereafter. It is maintained by some that the best features of modern civilisation and progress are due to something else rather than to Christianity ; and by others that its standard is too high for human nature, its mechanism too delicate for the rough wear and tear of every-day life. But is not this because there are in Christ's religion, as in everything that is great and wide, grades and ranks, higher for some, lower for most ? The ark of Christ's Church has room for all the creatures of God, various as they may be. Some men and women are called to follow Christ very closely, in love, in good works, in self-abnegation, in joyful self-sacrifice, in immolation of self for God and their fellow-men ; but all are not called to these higher ranks of the spiritual life ; the ordinary rule of Christ's Church is that men and women should serve God and do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. The majority of mankind has ever been and must ever be of the lower ranks of life, with a smaller share of wealth, power, education, enjoy-

ment. But for some in every age there is in this world high place, influence, luxury. What shall these do?

Let an old-world story be a lesson for the guidance of all those who are more favoured than their fellows, and possess more than others of the good things of life. Daniel tells us how "The king promoted Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon;" they did not give up their religion, because they were made Satraps in an idolatrous country. Once they were called to suffer for conscience' sake, but only once; the rest of their life they seem to have lived peaceably. If that was possible for these high-minded uncompromising men, can it be impossible for men to be true and loyal Christians, though they may hold high office, or enjoy great wealth, or be endowed with splendid talents, or be otherwise distinguished from or raised above the common average of their fellows? These men were of the seed-royal of God's chosen people; they were citizens of Jerusalem; but we see them captives in Babylon, yet there raised to dignity. Bible-readers will not find it difficult to see a lesson taught by analogy here. Those two cities Jerusalem and Babylon stand always in opposition. The Christian is a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, a prince, a son of the Great King; and yet for a while he lives in Babylon, this world, that is not subject to the law of God, but which must one day be destroyed. Some, like Abraham, flee from the kingdom, and live mysterious lives, alone with God; but more are like the captives by the waters of Babylon, helpless to flee from their lot; and some like Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel and his companions in Babylon, have their lot made smooth and pleasant. But Joseph did not bow down in the splendid temples of Egypt; and Daniel, in the midst

of Babylon, opened his window towards Jerusalem, and made his prayer three times a day ; and even those who wept because they were hopeless captives, never forgot Jerusalem their loved home.

A godly ascetic of old, if asked his age, said, he was so many years "an exile from his home." So may we look towards the heavenly Jerusalem as our home ; but while we live in Babylon, we must do the work to which we are called and appointed. Are there not many of us to whom this life is certainly not on the whole a "vale of tears?" Have we not many blessings, much happiness, great freedom from the more grievous misfortunes of life? We may not have wealth, or rank, or greatness in any respect, but we enjoy that quiet middle-class life that Solomon esteemed the best and most desirable of all. We then have been "promoted in this province of Babylon;" but let us not forget Jerusalem; let us not learn Babylon's bad ways; let us not make our home here; especially let us not fail to use our promotion to help those poor fellow-captives of ours, who have not been promoted; who have many hardships which we can do something to ameliorate. Esther was promoted in another great heathen kingdom; and Mordecai told her how to use her power to save her countrymen, and gain an excellent name for ever. Like her was Nehemiah, "promoted" to be the king's cup-bearer, though a captive. He, too, used his place to gain the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of his people to their long-lost and ruined home.

Let all these Scriptures be for our learning; and when we thank God for our lot and its many mercies, let us not, like Dives, enjoy all we can, forgetful of Lazarus at our gate; nor be like the man whose lands brought forth

plenteously, and who congratulated his selfish soul, while God called him fool; but rather like Joseph lay up in these years of plenty, for the evil days that are coming, making for ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's (the Prince of this world), who shall give you that which is your own, your inheritance in the kingdom of God?" "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and they who are true and faithful servants of the Great King, shall without fail be "promoted;" some in the province of Babylon; all in the city of God, Jerusalem the golden that endureth for ever, the true home and fatherland of all the people of God.

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#### THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

##### *The Wild Grapes of Human Nature.*

Those who have been in the countries where our choicest fruits grow naturally, tell us, that what we get in England is after all undoubtedly much better. We should have thought it would have been otherwise. We should have thought that where grapes, and pines, and such like fruits grow without care and forcing, where air, and sun, and soil are all that could be wished, all that our gardeners try to imitate, that there size, and flavour, and external beauty would be perfect, and put to shame the efforts of cultivation and artificial imitation. We see how superior nature is to the most skilful and laborious art in many ways, and we should at first

suppose that the same rule would hold good in everything.

But it is not so. Man's art can improve nature in some directions. Fruit and flowers, herbs and cereals, can be wonderfully developed and improved by man's skill and labour. Nay, the animals themselves may be improved, made more useful, more beautiful, more fruitful than they were originally. In a word, the whole of the created things of this world, animate and inanimate, are subject to the power of man. This is just what constitutes man's prerogative; he not only has dominion over the world, but being in the image and likeness of God, he enters into God's mind and works; he carries on the work of God, and the created things feel in his touch the touch of God, and obediently correspond to it. God has left part of His work to be finished by man; the crude material to be skilfully fashioned into a thing of beauty; the good to be made better; the separate elements to be mingled together, so as to bring forth a new thing, which has had existence only in the mind of God. The wild thing has indeed its own beauty and fitness, but when man brings his powers to act upon it, he changes the laws that hitherto ruled it; he alters, compels, brings in new laws, works like God, free and masterfully; and God respects and blesses his work, and the result is something better than the original that came forth from the Creator's Hand, and which but for man's interference would have gone on always the same.

But is this the sum of man's power over the works and laws of God? It is very wonderful, very honourable; it gives dignity to man's position; it brings him very near to God, and exalts him infinitely above the animals, who have not a trace of such a prerogative. But have

we told all? Is there not yet a direction in which this attribute of man may be extended, which involves greater mystery and more godlike dignity? Is it not true that man is by God's charter lord of himself, as much as he is lord of the external creation? Can he not alter, and improve, and develop his own natural powers, just in the same way as he can handle the lower creation? We know that it is so. See what suppleness, what strength a man can obtain in his limbs by training; what skill and perfection he can attain to in manual dexterity; what clearness of sight, what accuracy of hearing, what power of touch! Look at the expert at painting, or at music; to say nothing of the exquisite perfection of mechanical art, and a thousand marvellous proofs of man's power with eye and hand. Consider the powers of the mind; the learning of languages; the perception of abstract ideas; the cultivation of the sciences; the efforts of memory. Here, again, man develops the crude natural gifts of his original constitution, improves himself, and becomes higher and nobler in himself, more useful and honourable among his fellow-men.

But shall we stop here even? Have we touched even now the outmost bound of man's dominion, the highest reach of his godlike faculty of self-improvement? No, not yet. We have noticed man's relation to creation, to his fellow-men, and to himself; and we have seen that God has given him power in all these directions, but what of his relation to God? Man was made in the likeness of God, can he become more like Him? There are moral faculties in man; can they, too, be developed, improved? Is there the same law here as in the other parts of man's nature? Surely there is. The one answer to these questions is found in Christianity. The image of God was



lost at the Fall. God Himself came in human form to restore and to display it. Christ was the second Adam, the pattern man. In Him we see all the faculties of our moral nature developed and perfected. Christianity is but the following of His rule; it not only renders man's regeneration possible, but it indicates the way, the methods, and the ultimate perfections. The graces of the Christian character are in man originally in a rudimentary, undeveloped condition. Christ has brought into the world the means by which they may be exercised and cultivated till they grow and expand, and the man rises to his high calling of a son of God, an heir of heaven. The Sacraments and means of grace are to the soul of man what the instruments of his craft are to gardener and husbandman, artist and mechanic. Christians are called to be saints; not merely to be saved from the brutalities of heathendom, but to glorify God by their growth in His likeness, by their cultivation and development of those divine qualities which only wait in embryo to be kindled into growth and almost infinite expansion. The choice vine is planted, the vineyard is hedged, the tools are provided, the soil is prepared, and to each one the Lord says, "Go, work in my vineyard." The harvest is His, not ours. We are not our own; we have to glorify our Father in Heaven by displaying the qualities He has implanted in us.

This is the meaning of the labours, self-denials, and supernatural lives of God's great servants; what they do is not to try to work out their salvation. It is not, as the worldly and self-indulgent slanderously say of them, that they expect to gain heaven by their good works. Heaven and salvation have really nothing to do with it, for these they look with all trust to Christ alone; but

their work is to cultivate Christ's vineyard<sup>d</sup> for Him ; to bring some fruit to perfection ; to develop nature's gifts into the magnificences of grace. So we read of a martyr of old going to his death, crying out with joy, "Now begin I to be a disciple of Jesus Christ." There were evident tokens of Christianity, when he was following Christ to death ; the grapes were ripe, and were going to the wine-press.

This, then, is what the Master of the vineyard looks for in us, the ripening of the rich fruit, the result of culture, of long patient labour, of skill and thought, and of painful endurance. But He often looks in vain. That which Isaiah tells us of Israel, is really true of many still. What more could have been done for the Lord's vineyard? Why, then, by what strange and unaccountable perversity, does it after all produce "wild grapes?" Not, no grapes at all, but wild grapes ; after all the cultivation, still only mere wild nature. Israel like the heathen ; Christians merely good men and women ! It is as if the prophet said to us, "You are honest, amiable, industrious ; you give money sometimes, when you are moved by pity ; you are moderate in pleasures, good husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, neighbours, citizens ; and you say in your hearts, What lack I yet? Why, you lack but one thing ; alas, you lack Christianity ! These are all but wild grapes ; nature's produce, not that of art and labour. There have been better heathen men and women than you ; they will rise up in the judgment, and condemn you. It is the seed of an homer yielding only an ephah ; the vast powers of Christianity free to your use, and mere human nature the result after all !"

How many are neither better nor worse for Christianity !

What good qualities they have naturally, those remain ; but they are not developed ; and the plea for the bad qualities is that they are their nature ! What is all this but "wild grapes ?" wild grapes instead of rich luscious clusters ; nature's unimproved fruit, something like grapes, but useless ; as the prophet complains, where the original has a striking play on the words, which translation destroys. "He looked for judgment (*mishpat*), and behold oppression (*mispach*) ; for righteousness (*tsedakah*) and behold a cry (*tseakah*) ;" mere human nature, where there should be Christ-like exaltation of character ; the heathen code of moral respectability, instead of the Sermon on the Mount.

Now this Lenten Season is a time for awaking out of sleep. The Master says, "Why stand ye all the day idle ?" He will presently come to seek His vintage, and have not some of us but wild grapes to show ? What are we doing ? shirking all unpleasant duties ; always taking the easiest way ; elaborately discovering the minimum of God's requirements ; trying to persuade ourselves and others that we have some conscientious objection to practices, which in truth we only decline because they involve a little trouble and self-denial ; making much of one or two amiable natural qualities, and leaving the unamiable ones unchecked year after year, thinking it excuse enough that they are in our nature, and that we were not intended to be saints. Our whole religion a poor selfish hope of salvation, without one thought of why God sent us into the world ; what He would have us be and do to His glory ; accepting as a matter of course the immensity of the sacrifice at Calvary, the infinite power of the Christian means of grace ; and when they might have made us saints long ago, congratulating ourselves that we are on the whole decent, respectable

members of society ; not so very bad at heart, never having done much harm !

Let us be up and doing. The raw material of saintliness is in every one of us ; the wild grapes of nature, which culture can develop into the precious clusters of Eshcol. For example : there is kindness of heart that may become that divine charity of which St. Paul tells the Corinthians ; there is indifference about pleasure, that may be gradually expanded into Christ-like self-sacrifice, and joyful suffering for love of Him ; there is the will to do some unselfish work, which is the germ of heroic deeds for God, His Church, and the good of men. And so on with other virtues. If these talents lie wasting in their napkin ; if we are idle to the end, and never answer the purpose of our Creation, what will the Judgment Day be for us ?

May this Season of Lent teach us better ways ! God would not accept the "wild grapes" from the men of Israel ; will He accept them from us Christians ?

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## FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

### *The Poor Wise Man Forgotten.*

Towards the end of his wonderful life Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, and in it he summed up his experiences. Among these he gives the following instance of the world's ingratitude to its benefactors. "There was a little city and few men in it, and there came a great king against it and besieged it, and built bulwarks against

it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." No doubt he was referring to some well-known instance which his readers of that day would at once recall to mind, and if it is lost to us we have no difficulty in filling up the blank with instances enough, which history, sacred and profane, ancient and modern, supplies on many a page.

We know, for instance, what Gideon did for his country, and how his country rewarded him and his family. We know what Isaiah did for Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah; and we know that Isaiah was put to death by Hezekiah's son. We have read of the treatment of Archimedes of Syracuse; of Epaminondas the saviour of Thebes; of Themistocles, and other heroes of old; and of the Maid of Orleans and others in more recent times. We know the sneering definition of gratitude, "the expectation of future favours," and that if, as in Solomon's instance, the benefactor be one from whom nothing more is to be expected, it is likely enough that "no man will remember that same poor man." But at this season, all history, all experience may be put aside, for all benefactors of mankind are but faint types of Him whose saving work we commemorate; and all ingratitude does but tell us a little of the culmination of all ingratitude in the world's not remembering that same poor Man.

"There was a little city and few men in it," for what is this small earth of ours in the vast infinity of God's creation? A mighty prince has laid siege to it, and well-nigh made it his own, but He, who is wisdom itself, has delivered it; He who for our sakes became poor, the Crucified, Jesus the Saviour. And how has the world "remembered that same poor Man?" Oh, it is a weary

tale to tell. Read history; take up the map of the world; look out upon mankind to-day; see what kings and governments are doing; hear how men talk, act, plan. Where is the remembrance of the Crucified? Are not men getting quite enthusiastic because they have discovered that the affairs of the world go on well enough if the Crucified is not remembered?

O Jesus! O my Lord Jesus! Thou didst die for these men, and for this world! Thou didst know that all this would be, and yet Thou didst die for them and for me!

But there is something worse than this. The world is by its nature the enemy of God. It crucified its Maker; it crucifies Him daily even to the end. But "this poor Man" has friends; they acknowledge Him as their Lord and Saviour; they look to Him for help; they intend to spend eternity with Him. But His worst wounds are received in the house of these His friends. Want of sympathy from friends is harder to bear than want of kindness from the outside world. The Church at this season holds up the Cross and calls her children to thoughts of the Crucified; to giving up pleasure, business, time, for love of Jesus. But what is the result? It would be ludicrous if it were not so very sad to note how professing Christians ignore any interference with their ordinary habits, and what a variety of ingenious excuses they make for practically ignoring Lent, and the practices which the good and wise in all ages have found not merely useful, but positively essential to their spiritual health. Jesus stands bound, shamed, mocked; but Peter can think only of the cold, and gets near the fire to warm himself!

Men and women console themselves, in their religious indifference, by the idea that every one is like themselves; that these things are well enough in theory, but that no

one practises them. But if they do not find it out sooner, they will learn at the day of the revelation of all things, that while they have lived so very like the heathen or the animals, some in similar circumstances have lived near to God and kept Him in daily remembrance. Some who have marvellously realised the Passion, and have so been transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified; but many more who, in a lower degree, but most truly and really, have followed the precepts of Christ, who in heart and soul, in mind and body, in thought, word, and deed, in doing and leaving undone, in working and giving, in bearing and forbearing, in example, in helping others, have followed Christ's rule. While some have, with the pound intrusted to them by their Lord, gained the supernatural ten pounds; these who have gained the common-place five pounds will yet more astonish the slothful servants; for, to their careless eyes, they seemed so much like themselves.

With these, the great middle class of Christians, be our portion. We may not, perhaps, aim higher, we dare not aim lower. The world is cold, and hard, and selfish, and leaves Jesus alone upon His cross without a moment's compunction; even His own forsake Him and flee; but there is a little band at the foot of the Cross. Shall we not place ourselves with them? Shall we not say with some of Peter's faith and love, but with more humility and self-distrust, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I?" Though "no man remembereth that same poor Man," yet

" When to the Cross I turn mine eyes,  
And gaze on Calvary;  
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice,  
I must remember Thee.

“ Remember Thee, and all Thy pains,  
And all Thy love for me !  
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,  
I will remember Thee.”

O Lord, my Friend, my Brother, my Saviour, my God ! teach me to love Thee, though it be but a little ; that in me Thou mayest see of the travail of Thy soul, and though it be but a little, be satisfied. My heart is but a poor place to offer Thee ; yet since Thou art rejected and dost wander homeless among men, I will venture to ask Thee to come and abide even with me. I will venture to remind Thee that Thou didst not despise the stable at Bethlehem, the poor cottage at Nazareth, the house of Zaccheus the publican, the humble village home of Lazarus and his sisters at Bethany ; nay, Thou wast well content to take for Thy bed the hard sharp cross, and for Thy companions the malefactors ; perhaps, then, O my Lord, thou wilt not despise me, even me, such as I am ; and if Thou wilt but come, Thy very coming will make me less unfit to receive Thee.

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#### SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

##### *Wrong Ideas of God.*

Modern popular religion is deficient in its knowledge of God, and in its knowledge of sin. It concerns itself almost exclusively with thoughts about man. It exalts man's dignity, praises his powers and good qualities, measures everything by man's standard, exaggerates man's importance. The Bible speaks much of God, magnifies



Him, tells us of His attributes, and shows man his insignificance. It says terrible things about sin, its malignity, God's abhorrence of it, the difficulty of getting free from it, the awful doom that is prepared for it. If people read their Bibles more, they would not talk as they do, of God, of sin, of heaven, and of being saved. In a self-indulgent age, people shrink from pain, and from inflicting pain. There is now-a-days a morbid reluctance to punish crime, and men transfer their own feelings to God, and insult Him with mawkish flattering words about His love and mercy, as if He were such an one as themselves.

For a moment, let us put away the Bible, and let us appeal to reason, nature, experience, and see what they tell us. Creation is a revelation of God. It tells us something of God's nature, God's will, God's mode of dealing with His creatures. Now, does nature tell us that God is nothing else but love and pity? The works of God in creation display beauty, order, benevolence; but is that all? What shall we say of death and destruction constantly going on? Long before Adam sinned, there were fierce creatures armed with teeth and claws "seeking their meat from God" by causing pain and death to other creatures. There were tempests and earthquakes wrecking beauty, and reducing order to chaos. There was pain that was in no sense remedial. There were laws that acted relentlessly, irresistibly; these laws still act in the same way, and if any creature gets in their way, they are pitiless, and they mutilate or destroy that creature.

Looking at nature with an unbiassed mind, we cannot say that its sole object is the happiness of the creature. Such a theory does not at all account for all the facts plain before our eyes. Nor can we say that man is the

great object of creation, and his instruction and delight the reason and meaning of its wonders and beauties ; for the greater part of the human race never see or understand these things. Moreover these things existed and exist where no human eye sees, and no human soul is delighted with them. If creation displays God's love, does it not also display His power, His irresistible will, His awful purity, justice, His unalterable laws, and besides all this, much that we cannot in the least understand, when we try to account for it by our own limited knowledge, and measure it by our own feeble standards, and weights, and measures ? Nature is beautiful, but nature is relentless, if we violate its laws ; and nature is a revelation of God. Poets have written ecstatic praises of the sea's loveliness, and yet some of these poets have been drowned by the same sea. Fire, water, tempest, earthquake, poison, wild beast, disease, will they hear a cry for mercy and pity ?

Let us think for a moment about sin, let us look out into the world and see its miseries ; let us read history and imagine, if we can, what is the sum of human woe ; and then let us remember that all came through one sin. One sin ! People make light of one sin ; ay, of many sins ; but nevertheless that one original disobedience was the source of all our woes, of all the world's untold, countless miseries. What, then, must be the guilt of one sin in the sight of God ? What must be the malignity of one sin that has borne such awful fruits through all the ages of man's being ? Let us remember that our familiarity with sin renders us unable to understand its real horror ; just as one who lives always in a foul atmosphere does not notice it ; just as the man who suffers from a loathsome disease thinks less of it than those who see it for the first time.

Besides we are prejudiced in our own favour, like a criminal who excuses his crime, and fancies that the Queen, because she is amiable and kind, must interfere to save him from the punishment which justice rightfully demands, and which the wellbeing and the very existence of civilised society imperatively require.

But the true measure of the guilt and deadly power of sin is to be learned by contemplating the Atonement. See what it cost to pay the penalty of sin. No power of men or angels could atone for one sin. God Himself was obliged to undertake the work. Go to Calvary, and see what that one original sin was. If a lesser penalty would have redeemed man, would Christ have endured the Cross, the death, the loss of God's favour? If any other could have redeemed the world, would God Himself have undertaken it? Did God make a mistake? Did He do too much? Did He overpay the debt?

From all this there comes the practical question, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If the Cross preaches the love of God, as it does, and as nothing else can preach it, what can be the fate of those who despise that love, who crucify the Son of God afresh, who throw themselves out of the sphere of God's love, and stand wilfully in the path of His awful and inexorable justice? What must be the end of those who use no diligence to make their calling and election sure, but fool away their life in trifles, and give themselves up to that which they must surely leave behind whenever they die?

Oh the strange blindness, the suicidal madness of those who make light of God and of sin; and are only in earnest about this life's joys and sorrows and business, which to-morrow, perhaps, will be nothing to them, as they lie stark and dead! Surely an enemy has done

this, that men and women can be so deluded, so misguided, so turned from God's good way unto the way of destruction, and yet go smiling on, breaking God's laws, setting themselves against them, till those laws mow them down, helpless, hopeless !

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;"  
"Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."  
St. Paul knew all these great and terrible truths, and they made him afraid lest he should be a castaway. Shall not we be afraid? Fear seems to be cast out of modern religion, not by love, but by indifference. The saints were men of fear; the Bible teaches holy fear; the Church teaches holy fear. "There is mercy with God, therefore shall He be feared." Let us flee from God to God—from God's justice to God's mercy. Let us flee to, and cling to the Cross; so shall we not fear the judgment and the great white throne. Let us repent, and accept the way of salvation; so will God's *justice* demand our pardon as much as His mercy, for He will be "faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins."

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## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

### *Samson a Type of Christ.*

The prophecies respecting our Lord in the Old Testament are of various kinds and widely different degrees of clearness. Often we read of some event happening "that the scripture of the prophet might be fulfilled;" and when we turn to the original words in the Old Testa-

ment, we are surprised to find how remote they seem from any reference to our Lord.

But there is another class of prophetic interpretations equally unexpected, and beneath the surface of literal and primary interpretation—the typical character of many persons of whom we read in the Old Testament. The lives of most of those who are mentioned there are more or less prophetic and typical of Christ. Adam, Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon, are evidently types, and there are many more equally typical, though not so clearly. The lives of these, full of faults as they are, seem to be recorded for no other reason than that in some one particular they preached beforehand of Christ.

In fact, the Old Testament seems to be a book that must be read as science reads the great stone book which lies beneath the surface of the earth. In the fossil remains that tell us of the strange and various forms of life which once had existence upon this earth, we may discover a faint foreshadowing ever of some nobler creature yet to come. The human form is constantly approached nearer and nearer. There seems to be a unity of design in all creatures, and the belief that man was the archetypal idea towards which God was ever working, renders this intelligible and admirable.

Just so, the Old Testament, with its prophets, its deliverers, its martyrs, its kings, always preaches Christ. The rumour of the coming Perfect Man is bruited about with more or less truth and clearness; the various phases of our Lord's character are seen, some in one type, some in another. The shadow is necessarily an imperfect representation of the original; its features are even sometimes strangely distorted, the image is often reflected on most unlovely surfaces, just as we may see the bright blue sky

or some brilliant star mirrored in the dark impure pool that for a moment lies undisturbed in the midst of a noisy and miry street.

Such a type of our Lord was Samson. In birth, in life, in death, He set forth Christ, and yet he himself was anything but a perfect character, much less a perfect type of our Lord. His physical strength was only equalled by his moral weakness. Like David and Solomon he was a type of Christ, but the resemblance must not be pressed too closely, for the analogy breaks down. Just as a portrait fails to give more than a dead fixed likeness; there is none of the ever-varying, ever-accommodating power which belongs to life.

The resemblance of Samson to our Lord begins from the very beginning of his life. Samson was the child of promise; an angel foretold his birth. At a time when Israel was oppressed and degraded by victorious enemies, he was proclaimed, before he was conceived in the womb, the future saviour and deliverer of his people. Here we see at once the type of our Lord, who was born in the time of Israel's deepest degradation, and who was declared by Gabriel to be the Saviour of them and of the world.

The child Samson was to be a Nazarite; he was to touch no unclean thing, but to be holy to God all his life. Faint yet evident shadow of Jesus the Nazarene, who was conceived and born without sin, and lived sinless all His life. After Samson's birth, it is said that God blessed him, and that the Spirit of God was with him; almost identical words with those used of our Lord.

The very obscurity of Samson's life till he was a full-grown man, reminds us of that of our Lord; for of neither do we know anything till they had reached man's estate.

Then we come to more mystic events, which neverthe-

less find their full meaning in the great work of Christ. Samson will take to himself a wife from the enemies of Israel; he overrules his father's remonstrance, refuses the daughters of his own kindred, and goes into the hostile country of the Philistines to win his bride. They receive him ill; they deceive him, and he has to fight to defend himself. Now what was the mysterious will of the Son of God? Heaven was His home, perfect bliss and almighty power His inheritance; yet He loved mankind, that lost and cursed race that was at enmity with God. He left heaven and came and dwelt among us, that He might win from among us His Bride, the Church. How He was received we know.

Next we read of Samson meeting a lion as he was on his way to claim his bride; that he slew it without a weapon, and that presently the bees made their hive in the bones, and Samson ate of the honey and gave it to others. So did Satan, "that roaring lion," set himself as an adversary to our Lord. Death and hell stood in the way to oppose His work, but He triumphed over them, "with His own right hand and His holy arm," unaided and alone, and from the all-devouring grave He brought forth the sweetness of hope and resurrection; Himself rejoicing and bringing joy to us, who rejoice with Him.

The same may be said of Samson's breaking the cords with which he was bound; for of Christ it is said that "He loosed the bands of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." The same of his victory with the jawbone for a weapon; for so did our Lord use weak, despised, dead things to effect His great work, bringing life from death, victory from deepest degradation. The same again of Samson's exploit at

Gaza. His enemies besieged him in the city, but he rose up in the night, and carried away the gates, and foiled his enemies. So did our Lord burst the gates of death, and rise in the dead of night, while his enemies watched the sepulchre; so did He bear away the gates of the grave, that henceforth none should be there bound prisoner for ever, but that there should be a way of escape open to all.

There is a deep and sad significance as regards the two wives of Samson. Both played him false, and caused him a multitude of troubles. Does not this prefigure the unfaithfulness, first of the Jewish Church, and then, alas! of the Christian Church, to Him who espoused them to Himself? The prophets speak of the idolatry and apostasy of the Jewish Church under the figure of adultery. And what has been the history of the Christian Church? Heresy, schism, and worldliness have done her more harm than all the persecutions. The Church has been unfaithful to her Lord in many sad ways, and He has been wounded in the house of His friends.

Samson's betrayal and death are surrounded by unworthy circumstances, which belong only to himself, but still in the main they are typical of our Lord's last days. Like Samson, He was sold for money; like him, He was betrayed by a friend; like him, He had delivered Himself often before but now, when His hour was come, there was no saviour; like him, He was ungratefully forsaken by those whom He had saved and blessed; like Him, he was mocked in His affliction; like Him he lay in prison; like him, He triumphed more in His death than in His life, and was with the wicked in His death.

But now let us take Samson's history as a means of instruction for ourselves. Since he was a type of our



Lord, his life will to some extent set forth our life also ; for we are to imitate Christ, to be partakers of His sufferings, to be conformed to His likeness, and share in His triumphs. Still there is the roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour ; yet him we may resist and drive away, and presently find sweetness as the reward of victory.

We lament our weakness, our inconsistency ; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Sometimes we are manful and resist temptation, then we are overcome and fall miserably, and suffer for it afterwards. We have a weak side of our character, some besetting fault ; if we are assailed on that side we seem powerless to resist, and sometimes we think we shall never recover the evil effects of some false step. Now like all this was Samson. In some respects he was always a child ; he was inconsistent, weak, till his enemies seemed to have completely mastered him, and reduced him to hopeless and shameful slavery, and yet at last he triumphed and avenged himself upon his enemies, clothed once again with all his original power. In the Epistle to the Hebrews he is mentioned among those whose faith we are to follow ; he is no perfect pattern, but there is much that we may learn from him. If we fall, let us not give up faith and hope, and then like him we shall have our day of triumph over our enemies ; and even if it be not till the day of our death, the victory will be glorious, and will secure us endless peace.

There is one special feature in the story of Samson that demands particular attention. It is said that his great strength was in some way connected with his hair. When his head was shaved he lost all his extraordinary muscular power, and became as another man. What does this

mean? Was it his hair that gave him his great strength? Surely not. The fact was, God raised him up and endowed him with special powers for His own purposes, to deliver Israel from their enemies; but He gave him these powers on certain conditions. He made a covenant with him from childhood that he should always be a Nazarite, one of the requirements of whose vocation was that no razor should come upon his head. As soon, then, as one side of the covenant was violated and the Nazarite's vow was broken, the other side of the covenant was rendered void, and God's special gift of superhuman strength was lost. Now is not God's way with us something like this? Have not God's dealings with men been always more or less on this fashion? Man can do no great thing; man's part, therefore, of any covenant with God must be some trifling thing. Yet God has always chosen to require some small thing of man when He promises and gives His boundless gifts. So it was with Adam; one particular tree was forbidden. So with Abraham and his seed; circumcision was enforced. So it is with us; sacraments are the ordinary means of grace. In all cases the conditions are trivial in themselves; vast and all-important when insisted upon by God. Let us not then make light of means of grace, and expect to get what we so much need in our own way. God's way may seem different from what we should have expected, but if it is His way there is no other. What did it matter whether Samson allowed his hair to grow or cut it off? It mattered just this, that in the latter case he ceased to be a Nazarite, and lost God's promised and conditional gift. So people argue now, "What does it matter whether we come to God in one way or another?" Ah! is there not a right and a wrong way in everything? Is there not now, as

there has always been, a right and a wrong way in serving God, and seeking blessing and grace from Him? Who are we that we should dictate to God? We are not His equals; we are but His helpless creatures, altogether dependent upon Him. Unless we are lost to all reason, we shall humbly, thankfully, minutely, accept His offers of pardon, of grace, of salvation; not saying, "How can these things be?" but rather, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

Like Samson, we have taken vows. In our Baptism we promised to be followers of Him whose name was declared to be "Jesus of Nazareth." Like Samson, too, we have broken our vows, forfeited the promises which God made to us in covenant. Is there hope then for us? Can the broken covenant be renewed? Can we prodigal sons inherit the promised kingdom of heaven? Yes, thank God! Samson's history gives us hope. He repented in his prison; he prayed; his strength came again to him; he had victory after all his defeat and degradation, victory at death. Let us so repent, so pray; let us so have faith; so shall we at last overcome; so we shall ever be able to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. The righteous falleth seven times, and riseth again. The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

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## MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

*Apes and Peacocks.*

The story of Solomon has all the interest of a romance. What we know makes us long to know more. We are sure that if the annals of his wonderful reign could be found, they would abound with interest for all readers. Science would delight in his treatises on botany, in the discoveries of his navigators, in his mechanical contrivances for building, in his artistic design and ornamentation; philosophers would read with deepest attention his wise digests of the learning of the old world; moralists would listen eagerly to the experience of one who had so deeply known both good and evil, who had tried every possible human gratification, searched all to the bottom, and appraised each at its due value. Every thoughtful man would find something to delight him, something to teach him, in the varied learning and versatile genius of this, the most favoured of men.

Solomon must have been a sort of second Adam, a man raised to the highest possible pitch of human perfection, endowed with every gift, possessed of every enjoyment. Adam had all this in innocence; to Solomon it was given once again after the Fall. The fallen world's best was his; he was as it were the spoiled child of human nature; all possible happiness that men desire was heaped upon him. He stands forth an example of the greatness and the weakness of man. Every good thing was his, but he utterly broke down under the trial. He, and in him mankind, was proved unequal to sustain the responsibilities of unbroken success. It was shown

by example to all time that perfect happiness is not possible for man in this fallen world ; that, whatever may be the passionate cravings of human nature, the high purposes of God for man in this life are not attained by natural gifts, by sensual gratifications, by intellectual powers, by external delights, nor by any one of the world's best gifts, nor by all of them together, nor by any finite thing.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, which Solomon wrote in his latter years, sums up his experience. The first part is the weary cry of a soured, disappointed man, who has tried every pleasure, and been unsatisfied after all ; and who turns in angry and bitter disgust upon men and things, and even upon God Himself. But in the latter part of the book there is the groping back of the prodigal to his father, the return of the strayed soul to God, the true verdict as to man's principle of life : "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Thus Adam and Solomon stand out upon the page of inspired history as typical men. Adam, sinless, endowed with God's best gifts, yet falling, unable to sustain his privileges, breaking down under the test of perfect happiness. Solomon, receiving all that is possible in the world as it now is, and not only breaking down and becoming degraded, but actually failing to secure happiness, and turning in loathing upon everything, and almost upon God Himself.

Then, as we turn on through the pages of the great Book, there stands out a third typical man ; like Adam, He is innocent and sinless ; like Solomon, He is endowed with wisdom and all man's best gifts ; like both, He is tried ; and, unlike either, He stands firm. His one rule

of life is to do God's will. So He lives, and so dies, and He bids mankind follow His steps, if they would solve the riddle of human life, and attain to happiness now and for ever.

"A greater than Solomon is here." The Son of David, Jesus Christ, is King; but how different from the former son of David! Solomon heaps up riches, ransacks the world for pleasures, marries a thousand wives, yet has but one son, and he a fool; grasps at everything, but cries out at last that his life is a failure and a mistake. Jesus Christ empties Himself of everything, and becomes poorest, suffers shame, pain, injustice, yet sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied; has but one Bride, but of her begets unnumbered sons, and His kingdom has no end.

So then while Solomon is a type of Christ, he is also a contrast and opposite to Him. The two stand out as typical leaders of humanity, as embodiments of two ideas of the government of the world, as alternative models of human life.

Solomon made himself a great merchant-prince. By caravans through his city of Tadmor in the desert, and by his navy upon the Red Sea, he became the medium of all the world's trade with India, Africa, and the East. Like every one else who has secured that trade, he became very rich by it. Then, too, he was the great merchant of horses, lying as he did between Egypt and the Eastern nations. He supplied the kings of the Hittites and of Syria with horses; the traffic gave him present wealth, but it laid the foundation of future ruin for his kingdom; for it furnished his enemies with cavalry, which a few years after won battles at Israel's cost.

Have we not seen the same ill-advised trade in later

times and nearer home? Adulteration, imitation, dishonourable and dishonest manufacture, bringing wealth for a time, but leading to ultimate distrust and discredit?

Then notice the inevitable results of wealth—luxury, outlandish tastes and fashions, the inventions of satiety to create an appetite, and of pampered idleness to procure a new gratification. “Apes and peacocks,” these are mentioned as part of Solomon’s traffic. “Apes and peacocks,” to grace his harem doubtless, and those of his courtiers.

“Apes and peacocks,” far-fetched, most costly, but how little worth! Is there not covert irony in this anti-climax that sums up Solomon’s trade in such things as these? A long voyage, perils for brave men, time, cost, labour, anxiety, and the result,—“apes and peacocks!” Yes, is it not still so? Wealth and luxury, ease and idleness, the much-envied pinnacle of human happiness, the toys of the favoured few, what are they still but “silver and gold, ivory, and apes, and peacocks?”

Oh that the folly had been confined to the world and men and women of the world! Alas! the history of the Church displays the same. What was God’s purpose in giving Solomon dominion and wealth but that the knowledge of God might be extended far and wide? He recognises this great truth in his better days. At the dedication of the Temple he prays that “all people of the earth may know Thy name and fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel.” That Temple was to be a “house of prayer for all nations,” and Solomon was to be the great mission-king to teach wisdom and truth, and bring all the earth to know and worship and love God. For this he had power and peace; for this his ships sailed upon every sea; for this he had intercourse with all nations,

and was honoured and feared by all; for this all the earth sought the face of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart. But what was the end of it all? He seems to have done nothing for God. Instead of teaching nations to serve God, he even builds idol-temples in Jerusalem itself for his wives. Instead of loading his navies with the sons of the stranger, whom he may teach and send back to teach others, they come home after three years' voyage laden with "apes and peacocks"!

And what has the Church done in her palmy days? Men saw the truth and beauty of her doctrine, and that poverty and weakness hindered their spread, and they dowered the Church with wealth and power. And when they looked for harvests of souls, for a world conquered for Christ, they saw the Church busy with worldly policy, greedy of power and wealth, wasting herself in display and pomp, becoming mean and despicable in the midst of all her external bravery, gloating over as her dearest possessions such things as these, "gold and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks!" We pray for peace in our time; we know how much has to be done, how money is necessary; we watch anxiously the relations of Church and State throughout the world; but let us remember that the Church has been purest and most true to her mission when she has been poor, and persecuted, and made like her Lord in suffering.

And what is true of the Church is true of the individual Christian soul. We naturally desire peace, and quiet, and comfort; we almost resent it that we are called sometimes to suffering and sorrow; we think we should progress so much better if all was going smoothly with us. Let Solomon's example be a lesson for us. Un-



mixed prosperity is not a good thing; it is not fit for this world, nor for man constituted as he now is. There is a hidden virtue in pain and sorrow; nay, it would seem that they are in some way a necessity. Our Lord chose them for Himself and for those dearest to Him, whom He would most highly bless.

Solomon hid from Jerusalem all the labour that built the Temple, but without labour it was not built, nevertheless. At Lebanon and elsewhere there was hard work of head and hand, sweat and toil, and weariness, skill, and long perseverance, a struggle with the rough elements of nature to convert them into the beautiful creations of art. And it is easier to build a material temple than to make the heart within the true and holy temple of God. All whose hearts have been made the dwelling-place of God know what hard work is, and that they have something else to do than to think of "apes and peacocks."

" By many a salutary stroke,  
By many a weary blow that broke,  
Or polished with a workman's skill,  
The stones that form that glorious pile."

Lift up then the hands that hang down; be cheered, O suffering ones, till with greater ones who have gone before you by the same rough road you can even rejoice in tribulation. If we cannot, with some, court suffering and pain and run to meet death, at least we can take patiently what comes upon us. It is better to be with David, fighting hard against God's enemies, or even fleeing from unjust persecution, than to be at ease with luxurious Solomon.

Rest will be ours by and by, and pleasure for evermore that will not cloy, that will not degenerate into

morbid and vicious satiety and depraved cravings. The kingdom of peace will come, and we shall see it; but it is not yet—it is not here. If we would be with our Lord there, we must be with Him now; and the world must be to us more or less what it was to Him; and the nearer we are to be to Him hereafter, so much more will He make us like Himself here, in loss, and endurance, and sorrow.

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## TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY.

### *Using what we have.*

We are surprised, when we read the account of our Lord's second miracle of feeding a multitude, that the disciples appear to have altogether forgotten the former miracle, under such similar circumstances. They seem to have had no idea that a miracle might be wrought. They needed line upon line, precept upon precept, before they could take in a new idea. Like children, they had to learn their lessons by manifold repetition; and there seem to be other disciples of Christ in these days who require the same constant repetition of great truths over and over again in their ears before they learn them by heart. The Church evidently thinks so; for she gives us the same round of Gospels and Lessons year after year.

This life is not too long for our school-time, and we sit over the same lesson-books all the time; not because truth is circumscribed, but because we are slow at learning. When we have mastered these rudiments, we shall find

boundless stores of truth waiting to be apprehended by us. These same men, our Lord's disciples, so dull at first, when once they had mastered the great elementary truths, made rapid progress in the higher branches of spiritual knowledge; and doubtless they have been learning infinite lessons ever since in the presence of God, and will still go on learning, for God's truth has no end.

These miracles of feeding seem to be favourite lessons in the Church, for they form the Sunday Gospels three times in the year. Our spiritual mother must discern much in them that is necessary for her children. Let us try and learn at least one lesson from them to-day.

Now in both these miracles, our Lord, before He does anything Himself, makes His disciples turn and look at their own resources. He will not help them till they are convinced that they themselves cannot meet the difficulty; and yet He will not put out His own strength unless they join their efforts with His almighty power. He will not create the bread; He will not even make the stones into loaves; but He says, "How many loaves have ye?" He takes their poor little inadequate store as the instrument by which to work a stupendous miracle.

Now there is a great, deep, wide, everlasting truth underlying all this. If we will think of it, this is but one of many instances where God follows this rule of making man His fellow-worker. The work may be very unequally divided, but it is a law in God's providence that man must do something. It has been so from the beginning. Even in Paradise man had to dress the garden and keep it; he had to work; he could not make rain or sunshine; he could not even understand how corn sprang up and bore an hundredfold, nor how the sweetness developed in the fruit; that was God's part. But

still man had to sow seed, and prune, and train trees and shrubs.

It is so still. Man has learned and has used some little of his power. There have been vast strides in agriculture; science has been brought to bear upon it, and no doubt there is much more that man may do to make the earth fruitful, if he will use his talents to improve the world, instead of spoiling it, as he has so often done. Famine would often be staring us in the face, here in England, if we depended upon our own fields alone for food; but trade and commerce have been invented by man, and now if there is scarcity in one country another is ready to supply its needs.

It is the same with sickness. Life and death are indeed in God's hand, but medicine and surgery, sanitary provisions, the microscope, patient study and investigation, how much may these do to avert, to heal, or to mitigate the scourges that are part of man's lot in the world!

So it is with all the circumstances of human life; there seems hardly a limit to man's power to raise himself, and to make this world a brighter, happier place. How pitiable it is to travel over Europe and to see how little is done for this great end! To see, for instance, in every town, great and small, herds of men drawn from home, useful employment, and rational happiness, to spend all their time in learning the art of killing men; to see them toiling hither and thither, labouring with no result; spending the hard earnings of others, instead of supporting themselves, and adding to the wealth of their country and of the world; only to exchange this busy idleness for the yet more terrible work of destroying fair cities, laying waste rich and fruitful lands, and mutilating and slaying thousands of men, made in the image of God to be useful

and happy. It is of no use crying out against the miseries of the world; it is vain to call to God for help if we do not help ourselves. Let us do our part, and then God will surely do His.

Even the great act of the Incarnation had its human side. Mary stood as the representative of mankind, and her part was indispensable. So with the spreading of the knowledge of Christ; man must do his part; so with sacraments; so with each man's salvation. We must do our part; we must co-operate with God. This seems so plain and reasonable, as part of God's universal laws, that we wonder that any one should be ignorant of it. Yet people are ignorant of it; and in these days it seems to be a growing popular error that man's salvation is all and altogether God's work; that we have nothing to do with it, no duties, no sacrifices, no life-long care and anxiety; that nothing whatever is required of us but some vague indefinite feeling.

So with minor matters; what wasted lives there are because people do not use their talents! How many still go and bury that one talent that they have! They say they are not rich, or clever, or in a position of influence, and so they do nothing; nothing to raise themselves, nothing to benefit others, nothing for the Church. Yet there are instances enough in every age of the might of little things, of the usefulness of obscure persons, of the precious tiny thing that has been made a blessing to thousands by being brought out at the call of Christ and used by His omnipotence.

"How many loaves have ye?" "None at all," some will say; "we have no loaves; there is nothing but a handful of meal and a few drops of oil; I will eat it by myself, and die." But stay; is there not still the

hand of God to bless and multiply if His command is followed—if we have faith, like the widow of Zarephath, to take His unlikely way, instead of what we call our own common-sense course? If there is not a weed that grows but has its use if we would take the trouble to find it out, and its beauty, as any one can see for himself, can there be a man or woman that has not some good in them—good that may be made to grow and increase and be a far-reaching blessing?

We little know how much depends on ourselves, what great consequences may hang upon what seem at the time trivial matters. When King Joash came to see Elisha on his death-bed, the prophet told the king to take his arrows and smite with them upon the ground. He smote thrice, and stayed; and the prophet was angry, and said he should have smitten five or six times, for then he would have defeated Syria as many times, and delivered his country. That act of Joash no doubt was a characteristic one; he was slovenly in all things, wanting in energy and fire. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," and "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." The men who do most are not necessarily those who have most, but the men who use what they have with diligence and perseverance.

Let us then take this question home to ourselves, "How many loaves have ye?" *i.e.*, what are my gifts, talents, powers; what can I do for myself, for my fellow-creatures, and for God? No one was sent into this world without some good reason; every one has some good in him; every one is necessary; every one will find his greatest happiness, both here and hereafter, in making the best use of his gifts, whether they are great,

or whether, as is the case with the majority of mankind, they are small.

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### WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY.

#### *Jesus Asleep.*

There is only one instance in the Gospel narrative where we have mention of our Lord's sleeping. Being perfect man, we know that He slept as all men sleep. He slept in the manger at Bethlehem ; He slept in His mother's arms ; He slept night after night at Nazareth, the well-earned, sound, refreshing sleep of the working-man, wearied with a hard day's work ; and when His ministry began, yet more wearied with the contradiction of sinners ; He slept sometimes under the hospitable roof at Bethany—often perhaps in the open air, having nowhere to lay His head in home of His own ; often, too, doubtless, He robbed His body of sleep, that His waking soul might commune with God ; and while the world slept, except those who were awake for revelling, or for crime, He kneeled and prayed and interceded, while the moon shone brightly, and the stars wheeled in their courses over His bowed head.

Whatever is specially recorded in God's Word is so recorded for some purpose. There is no chance or accident in the things of God. As in His works there are exquisite contrivances which indicate a purpose, or several purposes, and which fulfil those purposes in a perfect manner ; so we have a right to scrutinise the Word of God, and try and discover why this and that was written. Patient

observers watch the stars, investigate the laws of the universe, dissect the marvellous organisations of animals, note the nature and habits of plants, search out the affinities or oppositions of gases, fluids, and solids ; so the Christian student will handle the Bible with reverent and minute study, searching for hid treasures, and ever finding something precious, something new. The fact of the existence of a blade of grass, of a muscle, or a nerve, the formation of a crystal, the outburst of a meteor, and all the ten thousand phenomena of nature, arouse the interest and attention of science, and give rise at once to the questions, why? how? what next? So the details of Scripture, and especially the incidents of the life of the Son of God in the world, stimulate the interest and attention of the devout mind, and make it ask similar questions.

There are in nature what seem to be insoluble difficulties ; there are facts that cannot be explained ; there are others of which some reason can be discovered, but which are evidently but partially understood after all. So is it with much that is detailed in the Word of God ; but in both fields of inquiry there is wide scope enough to occupy the mind and to employ the time of the most eager student. Let us then, in all reverence, try to see why this fact of our Lord's sleeping is thus preserved to us, and what we may learn from it.

First we are struck with the evident proof of the perfect union of the human with the divine, in the nature of Christ. Our Lord slept, simply because His bodily frame was wearied. He had been teaching and walking, and when at last He rested in the ship, and the soothing lapping of the water against the sides, and the gentle rocking motion of sailing, were felt, His tired body



yielded to the restful influences, and sleep came on naturally, to restore the waste of excessive fatigue. So profound and deep was the sleep of His perfect frame, untouched by disease or weakness, that when, as is common there, a sudden and violent storm came down upon the lake, He still slept on, like an innocent child. Here was the *man* clearly evidenced; but the next moment the power of God shone out. The storm must have been unusually severe and dangerous, for the disciples, who had spent their lives upon the lake, and must have been out in many similar storms, seem to have been thoroughly terrified, and after using all their accustomed methods of meeting the danger, gave themselves up for lost, and cried in an agony to their Lord for help. Then He arose, and with His Almighty word restored peace and order to the face of nature, driving away perhaps the evil powers, who were handling the laws of the universe to the hurt of man.

All this was part of the education of the Apostles. Their experience would convince them that such a storm could not so cease by any natural causes; they would be strengthened in the growing conviction that their Master was indeed the Son of God, the Creator, and Lord of all things, very God. This sleep then was the occasion of a manifestation of the power of God, a revelation of the great truth of the Incarnation, the coming of God among men. This miracle was thus a fitting prelude to that which followed, the casting out of the devils who possessed the two Gergesenes. The elements are hard to tame, but it is harder to tame the human spirit, and hardest of all, when that spirit is ruled and possessed by the mighty powers of evil. All these works our Lord did; and those who saw His miracles were so convinced of His

divinity, that they were ready to sacrifice all to proclaim it, and finally to die, rather than deny it.

Our Lord's sleep then was a prelude to a marvellous manifestation of His power. The sleep seemed to indicate weakness; perhaps the evil ones that watched Him, and knew not quite whether He were indeed God, raised this storm with the idea of destroying Him. But when their triumph seemed secure, their disgrace was at hand. Now does not this remind us of another sleep of our Lord? At Calvary, when all was done, He bowed His Head, and slept the sleep of death. Then indeed evil and evil ones seemed to have triumphed; then man's champion seemed to be vanquished; then those who had learned to see in Him God manifest in the flesh, might well be shaken in their faith; for where were the signs of Godhead now? If that sleeping form in the fisherman's sinking boat seemed unlike Almighty God, how much more unlike that white blood-stained corpse, hanging helpless and shamed upon the Cross? But as many a mystic prophecy had foretold, He awaked out of sleep, and arose to victory. The Resurrection followed the sleep upon the Cross, the victory over death and hell; by the side of which these miracles, that followed the sleep in the boat, seem small indeed.

But let us not omit to notice the curious contrast between this sleep of our Lord, and that of Jonah, which have in their outward circumstances so many points of similarity. Our Lord slept as man, because His conscience was clear and pure, because He had perfect trust in God's protection, because He resigned Himself absolutely to the will of God. But Jonah was disobedient to God; he had disregarded His command, rebelled against His will, set himself in opposition to God, and

gone away from his duty ; he had a bad and troubled conscience ; and yet in time of danger he slept, just like our Lord. Is it not often so ? There is a false peace, that counterfeits the true peace of God. There is so often a spurious imitation of that which is good and true and precious in this world, that the truest wisdom is to be able to know the one from the other, and to detect the lying, gilded, tinselled thing that pretends to be solid and precious.

But may we not say that this incident of Christ's sleeping has been repeated many times ; repeated in the Church's history ? "Lo, I am with you alway ;" yet have there not been sad, dark, tempestuous times when it has seemed that, if Christ had not altogether forsaken His Church, at least He was asleep, and needed to be roused by cries for help. And has it not been always seen, that when there have been men in earnest to call upon their Lord, that He has arisen in His might, and made His power known ? The state of the Church in our own country to-day, as compared with its dormant condition in the last century, is an instance of this.

Are there not times also when all this is transacted in the individual soul ? Without are tempests, within are fears ; sometimes in trial of the saintly soul, that it may gain spiritual strength, by the painful withdrawing of the sense of God's presence, favour, and help ; often through the soul's own fault, because there has been worldliness, sin, a desire to hide itself from God ; and so, though the presence of God is not really withdrawn, there is no comforting sense of it ; and it is with that soul as if its Lord were asleep within it, helpless to save it from temptation and falling.

As we look around upon many men and women who

belong to Christ, and yet show so little of the life of Christ in their own lives, must we not say that this Gospel incident is fulfilled in them; that their Christ is dormant within them, and that they do not even desire to awake Him?

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#### THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY.

##### *Martyrdom.*

For three hundred years after Christ, it seemed as if martyrdom was but another name for Christianity. All the Apostles were martyrs; all the bishops of Rome, and most of the bishops of other cities, and hosts of inferior Christians. Our Lord's words that He "came to send a sword upon earth," were indeed fulfilled. St. Paul says to his converts, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood," as if it were the natural end of their profession of faith. The peace of the Prince of Peace came through war. "Follow me," meant drinking of His cup, and being baptized with His baptism. Many, doubtless, esteemed Him a hard master, and never followed Him. Many, too, apostatised in time of persecution; the magistrates' courts, we are told, were crowded with men and women who came to get certificates that they had conformed to the State religion, and were no longer Christians. It is easy for us to blame them, sitting at ease and without the trial, but how should we have done, had we been placed in their position? Life is sweet; public disgrace, torture, a terrible death, these are awful things to face. Should we have been martyrs if we had

lived in those days? Do we care enough for Christ to die for Him? Do we value our religion so much that we could sacrifice everything for it? Friends and relations would plead and persuade, "Why should you refuse to do what so many have no scruple in doing? Why should you bring shame, and poverty, and ruin upon your children? Does God really require this?" Oh, what strong arguments would be used to keep us back, besides that stronger argument ever urged by human nature within, that death was a dreadful thing, and a death in agony and shame a thing to be shrunk from at all costs. Demas felt all this, and left St. Paul in prison, and was no martyr; and there were many like him.

How would it have been with us? The only way to know is to see how we act now when the alternative is presented to us of Christ, or something else. The days of actual martyrdom are over, but our trial is practically the same as that of Christians in those times. The martyr carries out the precepts of Christ to the letter, and follows the example of Christ perfectly; but every Christian has the same precepts set before him, and the same example displayed to him. There are not two religions of Jesus Christ, one for old times and another for the present day. The difference between the martyrs and ourselves, is not a difference in kind, but only in degree. The martyr gave his life for Christ and his religion; if we are living for ourselves alone, we are not of the same faith as he. The martyr endured pain, loss, shame; if we always choose the easiest, pleasantest way, and will not endure any trouble, or make any sacrifice for our religion, or for principle; where is our resemblance to the martyrs? If we treat our religion as if it were a commercial bargain, and try to get to heaven as cheaply

as we can, we have the surest proof that we are of a different spirit from that of the martyrs, and are not likely to go to the same place whither they are gone. If we will not spend time, money, or trouble for our religion, is ours the same religion as that of the martyrs? In a word, if our religion costs us little or nothing, and theirs cost them everything, where is the identity? where even a resemblance between the two?

Do we not forget this? There is a spirit abroad that preaches a new Christianity that Christ never taught, nor His Apostles. It is a religion that never can produce a martyr; for it is a religion that demands no self-sacrifice, no pains and penalties. It leaves men and women to live as they like best, and lets their tempers and passions go on unchecked. What would St. Stephen have said to this sort of religion? Would he have recognised it as the same in which he lived, and for which he died? What would St. Paul have said about it? what does he say in his Epistles? What would our Lord have said to it? what does He say in the Gospels? What will He say, when He sits upon His judgment throne, and St. Stephen and all the martyrs that followed him are gathered round, and their lives and deaths are set side by side with these?

All are not called to be martyrs; but the martyr spirit must be in all the disciples of Christ; it is the very essential spirit of Christianity. Perhaps the Church would teach us this by the position of those martyr feasts round Christmas Day. If they had been grouped about Good Friday, we might have supposed that they were only placed there to remind us of those who were made like their Lord by their deaths; but instead of that they stand at the very beginning of our Lord's life.

These martyrs are thought the most fit companions of His childhood, as if to teach us that from first to last this martyr spirit was the representative spirit of the human life of our Lord, and therefore of all those who are His disciples.

The Passion of our Lord is never absent from His life ; it is ever before Him. He speaks of " His hour," the hour of His death, long before it came. When He appeared in glory with Moses and Elias at His Transfiguration, it was of His death that He was speaking to them. Even after His Resurrection, He retained the marks of the wounds. After His Ascension He appeared to St. John as " the Lamb as it had been slain ;" and when He rode in triumph, " He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood," His own Blood, the redeeming Blood of His Passion. Isaiah had seen the Messiah, " red in His apparel." The sacrifices of the old Covenant with their blood-shedding, and the priest's garments stained with blood, all taught this great truth. The Church by her ceaseless Eucharists, " a perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ," at Christmas, at Easter, on Saints' days, all the year round, still holds up before our eyes Christ crucified.

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## FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY.

### *Death in the House.*

It has been remarked sometimes with impatience that the face of nature is utterly unmoved while events are occurring that are most momentous to man. The sun

rises and shines, the moon looks down placidly upon ghastly battlefields and smiling pastures alike. Great pageants are marred by storm and rain; and in time of most awful pestilence the sky is often serene and the weather perfect. When some great sorrow or some great happiness comes upon us, we naturally look abroad for sympathy in nature and the world at large, and in spite of the power of the imagination, we are generally chilled, disappointed, and almost affronted at the hard indifference of everything outside the narrow circle of our own hearts. Something like this is the feeling with which earnest Christians regard the indifference of the world to the Church's commemorations, especially during Lent and on Good Friday. For what is the attitude of devout souls all the world over at Passiontide? Might it not be expressed in those words in Exodus, "There was not a house where there was not one dead!" We recall to mind, we re-enact the death of One who is near and dear to us. To which of us does He not belong? Brother, Husband, Lord, Father, to some one, to some another, but to all something very closely related. No human tie exactly describes it; rather the tenderness of all relationships is in it. And now this dear One is torn from us. By the most cruel of deaths; after protracted torture; with the utmost possibilities of agony, bodily and mental, He dies; dies for us; dies through us. How shall we demean ourselves? Will not the analogies of ordinary bereavements teach us?

Do we know what it is to have death in the house? Do we remember what we felt when all was over, and the strange silence settled down upon us, and there was nothing more to be done? What we had been anticipating had come, and was so different after all from what



we thought it would be. Do we remember what we did and felt at that time, and what we could not do for very weakness, or from an unconquerable instinct of repugnance, or through a delicate intuition of proprieties? We need not consider those transports of grief, where the poor brave heart that had steeled itself into seeming hardness so long, broke down utterly at last; where all the joy and hope of life seemed to be for ever gone; the present mere agony, the future a dreary blank waste. Nor need we concern ourselves with extraordinary powers of devotion and ecstatic realisation of the verities of the Passion. There have been, there are saintly souls who are so saturated with the love of Jesus, that strange sympathy is excited between Him and them at Passiontide. But let us keep rather to the ordinary grief of a house where there is one dead, as a parallel to the ordinary capacity of devotion of the friends and lovers of Jesus.

What then did we do on that sorrowful day of bereavement, when that loved one was taken away, and after the anxieties, the ceaseless ministrations, the night-watchings of the sick-room, silence reigned; for all was done? The end had come, and the spirit had departed to Him who gave it. First we darkened the house and drew down all the blinds. No mere conventional sign surely; but a true token that we would shut out the world which we knew could not sympathise with us in our grief. We would above all things be alone; even kind words and sad loving faces seemed out of place, almost intrusive. We desired to be alone and silent. We had plenty to think about; the past was more present than the present itself. Oh, how vivid all past events, all the words, the looks of that dear one! How quick memory had become, bringing out of hid

treasure-houses little long-forgotten touches that made the recollections of the past to be life-like pictures! O how we loved that lost one now! How we grieved over little neglects, unkindnesses, mistakes! We had no care for eating or drinking; the mere thought seemed incongruous, repulsive; and if friends pressed us, and talked of duty to ourselves; why then, if it must be, let it be as little as possible, and that of the simplest and plainest. Our grief too made us gentle, tender, loving to others; and as the day wore on we became more calm and resigned. We could go and visit that room again, and its stillness, and the placid quiet of that face, told of rest; rest at last, after pain and hard labour; and we thought that, after all, there were worse things than to die.

And if that death had come in any way through us, or in any sense for us, then there would be other and hotter thoughts. How would the tears burn! How would the heart throb and swell, as sorrow, and love, and gratitude, surged upwards sob after sob! O how good to me! how loving! how unselfish was that life! O that I could make any return! that I could show my love! that I could whisper into those closed ears all the words that are rising in my heart, and filling it even to bursting!

If this is at all what we have known; if this is at all what seems fitting for "the house where there is one dead;" let us this Passiontide and especially on Good Friday go and do likewise. Our dearest and best is dead. If we love not Him above all things, yet He has so loved us. Secretly, lest we should thank Him, He has been doing us good. His one thought has been to make us happy. We have neglected Him, but He has not been angry and indignant, only grieved. He has been ever repairing the mischief we did to ourselves, and making

repentance possible for us. He has paid our debts ; He has been our friend and advocate ; He has received blows, wounds, affronts, injuries which were intended for us. Every limb, every member, every sense has been tortured to atone for the sins we so lightly committed, with every function of our nature. And now, last of all, He has died. He gave all He had for us ; all that was dearest and best ; all gifts and powers, not one was reserved or refused ; He emptied Himself of all, till He stood naked and destitute, having nothing but His life left ; and now He has given that.

For all ; for each ; for me ! “ There is not a house where there is not one dead.” For each He did all this, as if there were no one else in the world. For those who know Him not, thank Him not, love Him not. For us who know a little, love a little, and would know and love more ; for us He has done all this ; nay, more than we can know or think ; more than angels could tell us ; more than we shall be able to learn in the happy, endless ages of eternity.

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## SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY.

### *Spiritual Manhood.*

Bereavement causes sorrow ; separation from those we love is full of pain ; the loss of one upon whom we lean for support, to whom we look for guidance, whom we trust as master, is a bitter trial. At the grave side there are tears ; as the train or the ship bears away some dear

one, there are tears; as the bride goes away with her bridegroom, the long-desired boon of two hearts accomplished, still there are tears. When Elisha saw his master carried upwards in triumph, he forgot Elijah's exaltation in the depth of his own loss and loneliness, and he rent his garments, and wailed aloud. When their Lord spoke of going away, sorrow filled His disciples' hearts. But when His Ascension actually took place, we are told that they had great joy. They knew what was before them. They had seen how the world treated their Master; He had told them how it would treat them; yet they return to Jerusalem with great joy.

Can we enter into their joy? do we not sometimes wish that Christ had not gone away? If it were but the life of the forty days, the occasional, irregular, fiftful glimpses of the risen Christ still continued, should we not be grateful for this? would it not be better than what we have? If we look around or look within, what is the sum of all? Is it not that one bitter word "orphans?" Men scoff and say, "Where is now your God?" Not only is He absent, but He seems not to care what happens. Job's difficulty is our difficulty; the old-world cry for God that had no answer, is it not still echoing dismally through the world to-day? Oh, for one of the days of the Son of Man! Oh, for one miracle that would convince the gainsayers! Oh, for the incoming of that wound-marked form into some upper room! Oh, for the audible word, "Peace be unto you!" If He will not show Himself to the world, why will He not show some token for good to those who love Him, who are faint and sick at heart for one such help in these dark days, whose faith is like the smoking flax that is quivering and palpitating before its last little flame expires in utter darkness? Do we ever think thus?

Now, what is to be said to all this? Were the disciples right as they returned to Jérusalem with joy after seeing their Lord taken from them? or are they right who are downhearted and despairing because of the present ills and the outlook beyond?

Let us take a comprehensive view of what is told us of God's relations to man, and what do we see? It is objected sometimes that the story of Paradise, of the Temptation, and the Fall, are very childish; that the prohibition to eat of some particular fruit was suitable only for children. But are we quite sure that it was not intended to be so? are we quite sure that man's original condition was not something like that of a child? The traces that have been discovered of the early races of man in the world certainly indicate a very simple and inferior condition. We know very little, less than is commonly supposed, of Adam, his origin, his mental and moral position; but we see that God's way generally is to work from less to more, from inferior to higher. Adam, doubtless, had high and noble qualities, but he may have been a very babe in some respects, and the trial of his obedience was, doubtless, suitable to his actual capacity and powers.

It is objected again, that we are told of God holding sensible intercourse with man in the early ages of his history; we read of direct communication of angels, seen and conversed with; of distinct commands and prohibitions; of speedy rewards for obedience; of condign punishment; in a word, man was treated like a child. But have we ever thought that this was probably just because man was virtually a child; and that instead of these objections telling against the truth of the Bible, they are a strong argument in its favour? A child is led, trained, restrained, taught by a variety of methods,

punished, encouraged. Grown-up persons stoop, and condescend to its level; treat it quite differently from the way in which they treat one another. The child is not left alone; it always has some superior with it; what would be degrading to the adult, is quite fit and reasonable for the child.

Let us read the Old Testament with this thought, and perhaps many of its difficulties will disappear, or at least be much lessened. It tells us of man's early condition, a condition, as it would seem, parallel to that of childhood; and how his Father God treated him as a father deals with his little child. St. Paul seems to recognise this idea, and speaks of the Mosaic dispensation as a temporary and passing ordinance of God, suitable to the childhood of man.

In these wonderful days of ours, do we not feel sure that man has reached maturity? can we doubt, as we read the history of mankind as far as it is known, that we have the privilege of living when man has attained his majority, come into his rights, and obtained his inheritance? The child may be clever, the youth may show originality, and do some valuable works; but the man does more in a day than the child did in whole years. And that is what we see now; invention and progress go on by leaps and bounds; man seems to have come to his full strength, and at last to have learned how to use head and hands, eyes and ears; at last to be able to assert his lordship over nature, to rifle all her treasures, explore all her secrets, and use all her powers; at last to enter upon his original but long-deferred birthright, and to have dominion over all the earth, and every living creature that is in it.

If this be so with respect to temporal matters, why

should it not be so with regard to spiritual matters? We are so accustomed to our privileges, that we forget how vast they are; we chafe under the restraints that tie us down, and the limits that bound our knowledge, till we lose all thought of the darkness and ignorance of former generations, and of the small amount of supernatural truth that was revealed even to the saints of the old dispensation. Our Lord tells us that prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear what is familiar to us, and never had their desire gratified. He tells us that the least among us Christians is greater than the greatest before our day. God has opened His Hand and given us all He can give to man in this life; we know all that can be known of God and ourselves, of duty, of truth. Look at the heathen with their puerile fancies, their childish fears, their silly rites and theories, yet God was patient with them, for they were but children and knew no better. Look at the Mosaic dispensation, a system of rites and ceremonies, with no reason given, no explanation, no clear promise of the future life; merely the child's rule, "Do as you are bid, and ask no questions." It is different with us; we are called to liberty; we have light, we have a high rule of life, a perfect pattern of true manhood; and we are left to ourselves. Many persons complain of this, and look upon their privileges as misfortunes. They would rather be treated like children, like animals; nay, like machines. A leader of modern thought wished he could be wound up every day like a watch, so that he might always do right. Others try and persuade us that we are under the compelling influence of irresistible forces, and that all we do is a matter of necessity. But it is not so; we are free; we are not mere machines, not animals only, not even children; but

we are men; free men, and we must take our lot with its advantages and disadvantages; we cannot be at the same time men and children; we cannot have the stooping down of God to speak in our ears, to work miracles, to lead us by the hand, to hold us back from danger, and at the same time have all the prerogatives of spiritual manhood, the liberty of the angels, the freedom of the sons of God. Like the half-taught disciples, we want to build tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elijah; we want to keep them with us; we should like to be able to come to them in every difficulty, to get them to defend us, to convince our opponents by miracle and sign from heaven; to hear the clear voice answering our petitions, solving our doubts, directing us in all perplexities. It cannot be. The past never returns; the man never becomes a child again; even among the miracles of our Lord this never occurred. In this age, our difficulties in spiritual questions are the difficulties of men, not of children; our temptations are the temptations of men; our duties are the duties of men.

But it will be said, look at the sins and follies of the day; look at the want of spirituality, of saintliness; where are the signs of spiritual manhood? Are we not rather inferior to the servants of God in old times? A man may be sinful, weak, foolish, but he does not cease to be a man; a man may degrade himself, and do childish things, but he does not become a child, whatever else he may become. A man may waste his time, talents, opportunities, squander his fortune, ruin his health, till he becomes imbecile and prematurely old, and dies before his time; he may be a bad man, a ruined man, ruined in mind, body, and estate, but no one doubts that he is still



a man. His free will gives him the power to debase himself if he will.

"I will not leave you orphans," said our Lord. An orphan is a child without parents; we do not call a grown-up man, whose father and mother are dead, an orphan. So God has left us to ourselves, but He has not left us till we have come to full age, and are able to take care of ourselves. We have a goodly heritage; we are stewards indeed, responsible, but with great liberty, with vast possessions, practically our own. We are servants to whom their lord has intrusted his most precious things, and then gone away for a long time to a far country; but always men, not children; free intelligent men, not children under tutors and governors.

This those men knew who stood and saw their Lord depart, and yet went home rejoicing. There had been a great change made in them. Peter had put away childish things, self-confidence, and cowardice, and he had become a man, after the pattern of the man Christ Jesus. Thomas had put away childish things, moping despondency, irreverent conditions of faith, and he had become a man, ready to live and die for his Lord. So with the rest; the plain teaching of Christ after His Resurrection had opened their eyes. They knew all that the Son of God had come into the world to teach; there was nothing more to be learned; only the gift of the Holy Ghost came to confirm them, to quicken their memories, to help them to use and to teach what they knew. They felt their powers, rejoiced in them, and yearned to use them, as all men do who feel that they have great gifts from God. They felt strong, able to stand in their faith, able to lead others to the same high estate. The riddle of life was answered; there were no difficul-

ties ; all was clear ; there was work to be done, and its reward to be earned ; and then they would go where they had seen their Lord go, up through the open door to the home of man with His Father in heaven. "They gazed up steadfastly into heaven," not then only, but ever afterwards. In the upper room as they worshipped and waited ; in their mission to heathen lands, when men mocked, when pains came and cruel torments, when there was disappointment, failure, and at last shameful death ; still they gazed upwards toward heaven, and the sight gave them joy. They went on in the strength of the sight of that last triumph of their Lord.

This is still the Church's attitude. There is no past in eternal things ; there is no time. The Church that stood and looked up at her ascending Lord, is the Church of to-day ; and each Christian is a part of that Church ; all that is hers is his ; all is present ; all that has belonged to any member is the possession of each member now and always.

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## PALM SUNDAY.

### *Hosanna.*

It was as on what we call Palm Sunday, that our Lord received an ovation from the people. It was the beginning of the end. He had done many mighty works before, but now He had crowned all, by restoring to life, health, and vigour, by one word, a man who had been dead and buried four days. He had raised the dead before, but Lazarus lived at Bethany, close to Jerusalem,

and now at the Passover Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers from all parts. The miracle was in every one's mouth; men crowded to Bethany to see and talk to Lazarus; and they came back, talked to others, and the fire kindled and spread, and waxed hotter and hotter, till it must have vent, and it found it on Palm Sunday.

By some impulse, such as men feel when strong passion is circulating through multitudes of souls, crowds gathered, and set out to meet Jesus, as He came into the city from Bethany. A crowd soon makes a greater crowd. The multitude thickened, as it passed on its way; some one snatched a green bough, and waved it; others did the same; all did so. It was Passover-tide; but this host with its green branches became conscious that it was anticipating the feast of Tabernacles. Actions demand words; full hearts open the lips; hitherto one had cried one thing, another another; but now the moving forest suggested the cry that they ever shouted, as they sat in their bowers, or stood in the Temple area waving palms, on that great Feast of Tabernacles. So first one voice, then many, then the whole host with a roar, that was heard across the valley in the Temple Courts, and far away in the streets of the city, cried out "Hosanna!" the passage from the 118th Psalm that had for centuries been in the mouths of those that kept that feast. "Hosanna," "save us," "save us, Son of David! Save us, Messiah! Blessed is He that cometh, long waited for, long desired; come at last; mightier than Moses; conqueror of death; mighty to save; save thou us!"

So He passed on His way, multitudes before Him, multitudes behind Him, and He in the midst; and the cry going up ever from all alike, "Hosanna!" "save us!" How little they knew what they did! How little

they knew what they said ; what they asked for ; how little they expected the fulfilment of their prayer, so much wider, vaster, more blessed, than they could imagine ! For what was it all but a miniature picture of the whole history of mankind, from the beginning to the end ? The Christ in the midst ; on one side, the world before He came ; on the other side, the world since He has come. And the multitudes that went before Him, and the multitudes that follow, with many languages, in many forms, by many rites, but with one deep united unanimous cry, call upon that One in their midst, "Hosanna, save us !"

Look at that multitude that went before. There stand our first parents in their shame and agony, but just exiled from Paradise. As they offer the sacrifice of the life and the blood of the innocent animal, they are taught to cry, "Save us !" They teach it to their children ; and hope is warm and fresh in the world's youth ; the Saviour is ever prayed for, ever looked for. But by and bye the unwritten rule is but half remembered ; the tradition gets a twist, and is perverted. Strange variations are introduced into worship ; hope deferred makes men impatient. They make more of this life ; they exalt men to be saviours, and trust in them. But there is ever disappointment ; the sore of humanity festers, burns, aches. Men look up, look onward, and cry for a Saviour. Abraham is called ; Israel is chosen ; there is now one spot of light in the world's darkness ; sacrifice and rite, words and symbolic acts, all tell of the coming salvation. Out in the darkness of heathenism there is still heard the unceasing cry, "Save us !" In the midst of wickedness ; while men intoxicate themselves with revelry, or slaughter, or learning ; while men busy themselves with

inventions, with mighty works, and monuments; while the multitude sinks into slavery, and grovels through their little term of life with downcast eyes, and a growing likeness to the soulless beast; still there is heard a murmur, half articulate, half a mere wordless groan; and we can detect the old cry still, "Save us!"

"Save us!" did they know what they asked? Hardly; "Save us from misery, save us from ourselves, save us from sin, from death, from hell." They had tried many things; they had invented many remedies; they had set up, and hoped in many saviours; but all had failed; all were too weak; the wound was too terrible, the poison too deadly, the ruin had lost all shape; no one could bring order again out of that chaos of desolation. The work was beyond man's powers. Men could but look up to the Almighty, and say, "Save us."

But still they knew not what they asked. They knew not the tremendous price that must be paid, the penalty to be endured. But He to whom they cried in their helpless agony, He knew; and knowing all, He came forth and undertook the awful task. He has become man; He has come down into our midst, and made Himself one of us; one with us, our representative. He has loaded Himself with the sin of a world. He has put Himself in the path of the anger and vengeance of God. We stand at Gethsemane, and at Calvary; we see something, we hear something, we are appalled; but what know we still? What can we know of all that He endured? His Humanity seemed scarce able to endure the crushing weight, the inconceivable strain of what we asked Him to undergo to save us, of what He willingly, joyfully, endured that He might save us. The multitudes that went before knew nothing of this; but we

who are of those that follow, we know all that may yet be known, and this week we draw near, to see this great sight; we kneel in view of the Cross, and smite upon our breasts, and learn something more of what it cost to redeem our souls; and wonder, and adore, and praise, and love a little more. We are but poor scholars; we need line upon line. We can learn but slowly. The great book of God's love lies open before us, Christ on His Cross. It is all written in symbols; the Wounds are volumes, full of deepest meaning; the Nakedness, the Loneliness, the Crown of Thorns, the Title, the Seven Words; all is written within and without; all teaches more than we can yet know. But we go on learning as we kneel, and pray, and gaze, and then shut our eyes and think; and then gaze again, and pray again, and worship, and weep, and thank Him, and blame ourselves, and pity Him, and love Him, one after another, and all together.

Thus do we who are of the multitude that follows; but we too, with those that go before, cry, "Hosanna, save us!" We who are saved, still join the cry, "Save us!" "Save us from crucifying Thee afresh; save us, not merely from future doom, but from present sin; save us from coldness and deadness; the Pharisees' blindness; the Saducees' scepticism; the Herodians' worldliness. Save us from the greed and treachery of Judas; the boasting and timid denial of Peter; save us from the brutal stupidity of the soldiers; save us from the fickle heart of the mob, who changed their cry from "Hosanna" to "Crucify Him!" "O Saviour, save us; us whom Thou hast saved, lest at last we be lost. Thou knowest all our weakness, all our danger, all the secret sores that may yet spread and bring us to death. O Saviour, save us; us whom Thou hast saved; for we are not yet safe." "O Saviour of the

world, who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us, and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord !”

And see the answer to this world-wide, world-long prayer. Follow St. John, as he goes away from the Cross ; follow him into exile and slavery ; and then listen to his words, as he tells the vision he has seen of things that shall be hereafter. “ After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” The multitudes are there again ; the palms are there again ; the joyous shout. But now all are clothed in white robes ; all are clean washed in the Blood of the Lamb ; all are saved. There is no more the cry, “ Hosanna, save us !” but salvation is ascribed to its Giver. “ Hosanna ” has gone, and “ Alleluia ” takes its place, for ever and ever. It is the true Palm Sunday, the true Feast of Tabernacles, the true Harvest rejoicing. The earthly tabernacles are put off ; only the memory remains of the days when they dwelt in them ; all the long days of their journeyings through the wilderness ; the sowing in tears ; the daily toil ; the long patient waiting ; all are remembered no more by those who reap in joy ; who rejoice in the day of harvest. Now the promised land is reached ; the city that all the faithful have looked for ; the city that has no temple, for there they see God face to face, and the Lamb is in the midst of them, and all is peace and joy ; because all is purity.

O cry we, “ Hosanna, save us !” to-day, and every day, that at last we may sing, “ Alleluia !” Keep we fast by

that multitude now, that we may find a place hereafter in that multitude that no man can number, but where each soul is known to God, and knows God. Follow we that Lowly One now, wherever He leads us; not only when the world smiles upon Him, but to dark Gethsemane, to the Hall of Judgment, to Calvary, to the Sepulchre; so shall we find Him again on the great Easter morning; so shall we be with Him where He is in glory; where He hath prepared a place for us.

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## MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

### *How to Keep Holy Week.*

We have come to the Holy Week, how shall we observe it? Let us think what it is. We recall to our minds and to our hearts the Passion and Death of our Saviour. For us He was betrayed by His friend; for us He was bound a prisoner; for us the unknown shames and agonies of that night of horror were endured. Five trials, mocking, blows, hunger, faintness, mental laceration, the Cross, the desertion, Death. It cost this to redeem our souls. He might have left us, as we had left Him; and what would life have been then? Life without possibility of pardon of sin; life without hope beyond the grave. Many people seem to think of the Passion as an event that happened long ago; an event that concerns the world, the vast unnumbered hosts of mankind. This is a barren thought. Rather let each take his own soul in his hand, and remember that it



was redeemed as at this time; let each look into the face of his dear ones, and bethink himself that they were saved by this week's mystery. Let each Christian man shut out the perplexing crowd of beings whom he cannot know or be interested in, and see that tremendous work wrought at Calvary for him, and for those whom He calls His own. Let him look up at that marred Face, and see its eyes turned upon him, and let him read there the unspeakable truth, too vast to be taken in, that He loves him. "He loved me, and gave His life for me." Why? how? we do not even love ourselves sometimes, so mean and unworthy do we know ourselves to be; yet He knew all, and still loved us, still died for us, compelled only by His love.

How shall we observe Holy Week? Let us take that thought, and go upon our knees with it. For *me*; all this for *me*!

"Thy wounds my cure,

Hadst Thou not borne them, where had I been now?"

We are so much afraid of bringing our affections into our religion, and therefore it is such a cold passionless thing, so uninfluential in daily life. This week's tragedy is passed over as a dull historical fact. Men will not even turn aside to see this great sight. Its meaning has so slipped out of English hearts, that that sad anniversary Good Friday has become a day for excursions and merry-making. It is not done wilfully indeed, or with wanton irreligion, but only ignorantly, and because people have never yet felt the great truth of their own personal interest in Good Friday's work; because they have never known their Lord as their own dear friend, to whom they owe so much. The finer feelings of our nature must be cultivated and trained. The rude, coarse,

rough manners that prevail around us, especially in our large towns, influence our religion, and those who show no respect to man, become irreverent towards God.

Were not the Roman soldiers who beat and pushed our Lord, who dressed Him up and laughed at Him, who drove the nails through His hands and feet—were not these the prototypes of our Good Friday holiday-makers? "They know not what they do." But what did Mary and Magdalen and John think of those soldiers' doings? This is our rule. Our place should be with them at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday; our heart's sympathy with them. Our Lord expects this of us. It is the least we can do. We know who it is that suffers, and why. The soldiers sit down to eat and drink when their work is done, without a thought of wrong. Their hands are stained with the blood of God which angels are adoring, but they know nothing of it. They joke and laugh with their mouths full of their food; they pass their wine to one another with rough good-nature. But the Eternal God is hanging upon the Cross above them. The Saviour of the world is breathing out His last sighs. We know this, if they do not. We have heard a voice telling us that this is holy ground; we hide our faces, for we dare not see what these men in their ignorance are doing to God, and what God is enduring. "The bush burns with fire, but is not consumed." Man is enduring the wrath of God, the withdrawing of His favour in His sorest need. No mere man could endure this and live. The sins of the whole world are crushed down upon that Head, yet He endures. We are within the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, the innermost shrine of the one Temple of God; and being there, we are bidden to take off our shoes from our feet, as all must do who enter

there. The Great High Priest is there offering the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world. He offers Himself. He is at once both priest and sacrifice. All the world's history, all mankind's hopes, are concentrated in that tremendous act. God is dying, yet nature does not collapse. Man is murdering God, yet there is but an earthquake and a darkening of the sun. The deed is begun, and carried through all its awful details, and finished.

Do we say, "How is this? I do not understand it; it shocks my reason; I must think of it, work it out, investigate it." But no; there comes a voice, "Draw not nigh hither." There must be worship afar off. We must stand like slaves with bare feet, hiding our faces with fear and shame. We could not understand it if we would. We must adore, and be silent.

Thus let us keep Holy Week. Let us take our shoes from off our feet, for this is holy ground. They who go forth to work put on their shoes; we who draw nigh to worship strip them off. We lay aside for a while the world's work and thought, and enter the sanctuary of the Passion as priests of God, while the one High Priest offers the sacrifice, and we stand and wait. Only let us not forget that the priests washed their feet before they entered the Holy Place. The feet are our point of contact with the earth; even they who have once for all been washed, must again and again wash their feet. None must enter unprepared into that presence. We cannot walk this world's ways without defilement; and we cannot even understand holy things while unpardoned sin is upon us. It is those who have washed seven times, and whose flesh has come to them again like that of a little child, who may draw nearest to God. O how

much does this explain of ignorance of God and His truth! There wants the cleanness that they must have who have to do with God. How much coldness and irreverence in holy things, how much want of affection, how much absolute inability to enter into the spirit of sacred seasons, comes only from this, that there is uncleanness, partial and incomplete repentance, imperfect conversion of the heart to God!

If, then, we would observe Good Friday well, this we must do. We must betake ourselves to that upper chamber where the Lord is with His disciples, and let Him prepare us as He prepared them the night before. See, He is down upon His knees, in the form of a servant; He goes round to each and washes his feet. So He prepared them to stand upon that holy ground and see that great sight, and there is no other preparation.

The day is coming when every eye must see Him that was pierced. They who have long before and often gazed upon Him in His passion will meet Him with joy in His glory. The preparation for heaven is made at the foot of the Cross, and we must prepare ourselves, or we shall never find ourselves there, nor be able to stay there if for a moment we can draw near. The whole atmosphere of the world, the whole bias and instinct of our nature, all the efforts of the powers of evil, all these combine to keep us away from the Cross. Even His own disciples leave their Master when He is upon the Cross. "Will ye also go away?" Nay, let us turn aside to see this great sight, with bared feet, washed and clean, with deep repentance, with love and gratitude, with wonder, and reverence, and fear, in lowliest prostration of soul let us look upon God. For Christ upon His Cross is God's

revelation of Himself. It is an open book that all may read who will turn their eyes upon it. It is God's own sermon. Let us say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

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## TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

### *The Three Crosses at Calvary.*

Our crucified Lord is the one object of the eyes of our soul every day this week. All through Lent we have been preparing for this; day by day this week we read the record of the Passion, thinking about it, praying about it. The business of Holy Week is to realise the crucifixion of our Lord. For this we set aside work, meals, words; we spend our time, as far as we possibly can, with that little, silent, sorrowing, loving band that stands at the foot of the Cross. This is the thought of the devout soul, "Jesus, my Lord, is crucified, crucified for me; all else is as nothing to me. I can see, hear, think of nothing else, no one else. Christ crucified—this is all the world to me just now."

So let it be; and yet we shall perhaps better keep to that one thought in our devotions, if for a short time we turn away to another thought; turn not away from the Cross, we cannot do that, but take a few steps backward from its foot for a little while only, and gaze at a greater distance and worship, and learn a little of the boundless love that lies before us in that revelation of the love of God.

We draw back then a little, and leave the mother, St. John, and Magdalen; and what do we see now? we see not Christ only but two others crucified, "on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." We were so close before that we could see Christ only; but now we see the malefactors also. There is the Holy One, the beautiful, the pure, the loving Jesus bruised, wounded, marred, very near death. The supernatural darkness wraps all in obscurity, but we can just see that He turns His Head; we hear Him speak, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." He speaks to one of the two crucified with Him. Look at that man, he is yet full of life; he turns eagerly towards Him whom he owns as his Saviour, whom he recognises as King, in spite of the mocking Crown of Thorns; he has eyes for no one, for nothing else; he strains towards Him; his feet are nailed, but his soul is free, and it rushes impetuously to its Lord; his hands are nailed, but his soul is free, and it lifts itself up in prayer; his knees may not bend, but his soul worships in lowly, loving, joyous adoration. The Precious Blood from the Wounds trickles down, and seems to waste itself at the foot of the Cross; it cannot touch his body, but it has bathed and cleansed his soul; and in spite of shame, and agony, and coming death, he is now in an ecstasy of peace, and gratitude, and joy, and hope.

But look at that other; he too is yet full of life and vigour, but he writhes in his agony, and seems occupied with nothing else. A while ago he stopped his groans and curses to join the mocking bystanders and taunt Christ, and bid Him save Himself and His fellow-sufferers, if He could; but now he turns his head away

from Him, and scowls and moans, and suffers in sullen despair.

How different the three crucified, alike in nothing but their suffering and death! The same end by such different roads, the same endurance, yet how unlike the three souls that endure! Of that thorn-crowned Sufferer His judge had said, "I find no fault in Him;" nay, the Holy One Himself had declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet He suffers even to death; He suffers, we know, the "Just for the unjust;" He suffers to save.

But this is not all. He suffers, the Exemplar of suffering innocence. This is a great mystery. A dull shadow of suffering ever looms over this world; it is always there, and from it there dart out constantly lightning rays of agony, that smite now this one, now the other of the vast mass of suffering humanity. Man is born to trouble; the poor little babe, a span long, wails as it enters the world; and all along life the innocent suffer, and tears, and sighs, and groans go up without ceasing wherever there are men.

"An enemy hath done this." This is not what God pronounced very good. There is discord in the harmony of creation. That Holy and Merciful One, that hangs, and bleeds, and suffers before our eyes, put Himself in the tide-way of human suffering that He might endure its full brunt, and exhaust its force, and break its pride of power.

What then? Is there no more suffering for the world, or at least for the favoured disciples of the Crucified? Nay, the world is still a vale of tears, and the disciples of the Crucified are the chief mourners. To His dearest and choicest He specially gave to drink of His own bitter cup.

What avails then His mission? If mankind would accept it, His remedy would cure the evils of life and the miseries of mankind, restore Paradise, and make it world-wide. His precepts of love would disarm the shafts of evil, or extract the poison, and heal the wounds of all that may not yet be destroyed. But man blindly refuses Him and His salvation, and blunders on, suffering, and making to suffer. But those who will He blesses with His own peace, even upon the Cross. He will have them crucified indeed with Him; nay, His spirit has made them, like Him, yearn for the Cross, and glory in it, looking on beyond this life for rest and joy. The more like Him they are, the more His suffering life is repeated in them; they partake in His Passion; they are nailed to His Cross. This world to them, as to Him, is but a place of suffering, and their sole hope of relief is in the kingdom of heaven.

But now look once more at the crucified sufferer who averts his scowling face from Christ. "We indeed justly;" his sins had found him out; with his own hand he had drawn down upon himself more than his share of life's miseries. As he had sowed, so he was reaping—remorse for the past; agony, shame, rage at the present; despair for the future. Unhappy man! human life has inevitably trouble for all, but his sins and mad follies have intensified his troubles tenfold. The remedy for trouble is close at hand; his fellow-sufferer has just found it, and used it, and is even now rejoicing in it; but he turns away his head, and will not be helped and blessed.

Too true a picture, alas! of many; the inevitable Cross made intolerably heavy and bitter by choice of evil, by persistent rejection of Christ. Look out into the world,



and then look at the malefactor dying in agony close to Christ, with face averted from Christ, and see the sad true picture of the soul that will not be saved, that suffers more than it need have suffered, that suffers without alleviation, and without hope.

Turn we then to the third cross at Calvary, the cross of accepted repentance. It may be late, alas ! with some of us, as it was with that penitent, but thank God it is not yet too late. Time passes swiftly, and but little remains ; death is creeping over us, and making good its hold, that it may clutch us and take us away. The Lord Himself is not with us always ; but He has not yet said, "It is finished." He waits for our cry for pardon ; He suffers on that He may say the absolving word to us.

O happy penitent ! be our place with thee ! Like thee we are malefactors ; like thee we are thieves, for we have robbed God, our neighbour, and our own souls of their own. Like thee we have suffered the due reward of our deeds ; like thee, late though it be, we turn with all our power to the Crucified ; like thee we are sure of pardon ; like thee, and with thee, and untold hosts of happy ones, we shall sing one day before the throne, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

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## WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

*Judas a Warning to the Most Advanced Christians.*

Privileges are no protection against their own loss. Everywhere, both in revelation and in daily experience, we see failure and substitution. Every one has his day, and then there comes either promotion, or degradation, or death; "go up higher," or "give this man place." We are all on our trial; there are grave eyes watching us; there is a Hand weighing our actions.

Judas was chosen by our Lord to be an apostle; we are certain, therefore, that he had gifts that fitted him for that high office, and these gifts were further increased by his ordination and mission. There were sick whom Judas had healed; there were disciples who had believed, convinced by the powerful preaching of Judas. Yet he who preached to others became a castaway; he who poured the regenerating water upon others became apostate; he who so believed on Christ that he forsook all and followed Him while the world rejected Him, fell lower than all; he who had seen the dead raised and heard Him who spake as never man spake, who was so familiar with his Lord that he kissed Him as an ordinary salute, who had for years daily experienced His love, he, for a petty sum of some three pounds, betrayed that Master, and then could not repent. Yes, could not repent. Of all the terrible story, this is the most terrible feature. He had opportunity of repentance; he who had been taught how to preach repentance by Jesus Himself, he who had held familiar intercourse with the Friend of sinners, must have known the way to obtain God's pardon; he must

have known that the gate of mercy would not be closed in his face if he would but go there and knock. One look from the face of Jesus broke down Peter's hardness and melted him to penitential tears, but Judas could hear himself called "friend," could look into those loving eyes, and yet repented not. Remorse came, but not repentance. If only he had turned back to his Lord instead of arguing with the chief priests, he would have been pardoned and reinstated, and would now have been known to the Church as St. Judas, apostle and martyr.

Judas stands as a perpetual warning, not to the ungodly and careless, not to the unbelieving and profane, but to the highest, the most privileged, the most advanced Christians, to those who have been brought nearest to their Lord. In every age of the Church there have been apostates. Men have gone straight from the very side of Christ to the world, the flesh, or the devil, and have said, "What will ye give me, and I will betray Him unto you?" Men have held their Lord so cheap that they have not waited to be tempted, but have hawked Him before the eyes of every profane buyer. Judas's thirty pieces, Joseph's price, Esau's pottage, these are positively good bargains compared with that which some get as the price of their Lord. He is sold for nought, and no money taken for Him. "Every man has his price," says the cynical man of the world. Let us pray with all our heart, "Lord, lead us not into temptation," for we are very weak; we doubt our own rectitude. Let us daily repent, daily keep watch upon ourselves, lest some besetting sin silently, gradually get the mastery within, even while we are coming regularly to the Table of the Lord, and teaching or doing works of mercy in Christ's name. It was after receiving Holy Communion that Judas completed

his apostasy, and therefore the Church warns communicants that they examine themselves before they come, "lest the devil enter into them as he did into Judas, and bring them to destruction of body and soul."

We know not why Judas committed his crime. Perhaps he was disappointed because the kingdom of Messiah was so long in being established, and the high places and rewards that he looked for in return for having forsaken all to follow Christ did not come to him. The clouds were gathering and threatening, and he determined to be beforehand and secure something at least for himself. He thought his Master "a hard man," and His service no longer tolerable. Are such temptations unknown to us? Does not the world allure us from Christ by comparing its rewards with His? Does not the flesh rebel against the Cross? Are we not wearied sometimes with well-doing? Does not religion disappoint us, till we are inclined to give all up? God help us at such times! The temptation of Judas is then at hand. Our one way of safety is not in going away from our Lord, but in drawing nearer to Him. "Come unto me," He says, "all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Gracious words! all the more gracious and wonderful because they come immediately after bitterest woes denounced upon those who will not accept His mercy.

But this is not all. He says that the way to get rest for our souls is to take His yoke upon us, and that "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." Let us understand what this means. The yoke is not the burden, but a help to carry the burden more easily. It is fitted to the neck and shoulders, and enables a man to carry his load with less difficulty and fatigue. So is it with Christ.

Every one must bear his own burden ; every one born into the world must have his share of trouble and temptation, of work and discomfort. Many bear it grinding and galling upon their bare shoulders ; but Christ offers His yoke, that makes the ills of life more tolerable, and adapts the inevitable burden to the form and power of each.

Let us think thus of Christ. His service is true freedom ; His yoke makes the burdens of life rest more easily upon our shoulders. "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." "Since the day that sentence was spoken by Him, it has been the strength and consolation of thousands. If it were given to us at this moment to behold in vision the multitudes in every age who have drunk of the well of blessings which is continually springing from this inestimable declaration ; if our Bibles could retain the pictured shadows of those hosts of sad and sorrowing faces that in the long succession of centuries and the wide variety of Christian countries have bowed over the page that speaks these words of refreshment, and risen renewed in hope and happiness, truly we might have wherewith to silence the scoffer, a cloud of witnesses to testify that the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." Some day the miracles of God's love wrought in the hearts of His faithful servants will be known, and will be seen to be greater even than those wonders of healing of the body in the days of His flesh.

"Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." What hast thou ? Thou hast a cross now ; clasp it tightly, bear it constantly. If the cross goes, the crown goes. If the cross is borne, it has a promise for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

For the life now, rest, ease ; rest in the midst of unrest, ease under the burden of pain and anxiety. For the life to come, a crown of glory, won for thee, when cruel thorns were the crown of thy Lord, thy Saviour.

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### MAUNDY THURSDAY.

#### *Christ the Bread of Life.*

Bread is the staff of life ; being eaten, it is incorporated into the body. Even in the very first pages of Scripture we meet with the connection of eating with immortality. The fruit of the Tree of life was in Paradise the Bread of life for unfallen man ; lost by the Fall, it has been more than restored in Christ. In the religious rites appointed by God we have these ideas constantly recurring—the sacrifice of life in atonement for sin, the pouring out of the blood before God, the burning of part of the flesh as an offering to God, and the eating of part of it by man to unite himself with the sacrifice, and the offering of bread or flour in connection with these bloody sacrifices. There was the mysterious primitive priest and king Melchizedek with bread and wine, the shewbread in the Tabernacle and Temple, and there were the offerings of fine flour in the Levitical ritual. Christ fulfilled all these typical rites, and He expresses all when He says, “I am the Bread of life.” These words seem to have been uttered long before they were actually fulfilled. But this is of no moment. Christ saw the end from the beginning ; His Passion and its consequences were ever present before Him, and He speaks of them long before

they came to pass, and before those who heard Him at all understood to what He referred.

It was in the second year of His ministry that He used this simile. There was a double fitness in the occasion. It was the time of the Passover, when the Lamb slain and eaten with unleavened bread, and its blood sprinkled upon the door-posts, told of Himself, His sacrifice, His saving blood, and of communion with Him by eating spiritually of His flesh. He had just worked a miracle and fed thousands of hungry and faint wayfarers with bread, which His word had made effectual beyond its natural properties. Those who had partaken of His bounty followed Him hoping for more, after the manner of men ; and the unbelieving elders of Capernaum, who had not seen the miracle, set themselves to depreciate Him before the multitude by comparing Him disadvantageously with Moses. "If," said they with a sneer, "you have by some means given these poor people some barley bread once, what is that to the work of Moses, above whom you try to set yourself as a teacher and prophet ? for he for forty long years fed the vast hosts of Israel in the barren desert with the sweet, sustaining, miraculous manna. What is this act of yours, which may have deluded these poor people, but which we are too intelligent to accept without better evidence, to that grand, sustained, undeniable miracle of our great law-giver ?" Our Lord in reply gave that discourse which so completely bewildered and scandalised them. First He said that Moses was but God's servant, acting not by his own power ; but that He Himself was one with God, and did His acts by His own inherent omnipotence ; that He was the true Bread, the life of man, and that presently He would give His flesh and blood as man's food, the

remedy of the Fall, the antidote of death, the certain means of resurrection. In no way did He explain this; for tender as He is to those who desire to believe, who love God and seek Him with the whole heart, He catches the self-satisfied in their own craftiness; He scorneth the scorers, and lets men fall into the nets which their own subtilty has woven and laid.

So it is that much present unbelief is explainable. Men come to God as if they were His equals; nay, they put Him upon His defence, as if His words or acts needed apology or explanation; they forget what they are and what He is; and then they turn round and show how they have proved the rational grounds of their infidelity, for God has been challenged to come out and prove Himself, and has not appeared. "He beholdeth the proud afar off." To know God's greatness, we must first know our own littleness; to know Him as He is, we must first remember what we are in all our insignificance, ignorance, and sin.

But let us leave these general statements to dwell upon that particular and special meaning of our Lord's words. He was the Bread of life to all flesh from the beginning; but in the fulness of time, as on this day, He instituted a marvellous ordinance for which the rites, the prophecies, the types of ages had been preparing, and in which He became literally, verily, and indeed the Bread of life, the very food of His faithful disciples. He had spoken of Himself as the Good Shepherd, feeding His flock, and giving Himself for the life of the sheep; but who could have understood that His flesh would be the food, His blood the drink of the soul? Yet this, and nothing less, is what His Sacrament of Holy Communion is. We care not to inquire how it is; we say of this better manna, what Israel said of the first manna, "What is it?" We are



content to give it that for its name, an unanswered question, and to eat and be thankful. We stop not to explain; we make no question of words, terms, controversies; we take the fact, upon which all are agreed, that in this ordinance of Christ Himself He gives Himself to the soul of the faithful communicant, to be as truly its food as bread is the food of the body. This is the crowning act, His Incarnation; no greater thing than this, it would seem, is possible even for God. There is no closer union except in heaven than that which the penitent, faithful, loving communicant has with His Saviour and His God when he kneels at the altar and is made one with Christ and Christ with him.

We may not attempt even to select a few of the testimonies of faithful and loving hearts in all ages to the truth and sweetness of this mystery. Where many volumes have not exhausted the subject—where each devout heart comes fresh to the wondrous fact, and finds ever something new, something special for itself—what hope for us but to weaken what our own souls already know by experience if we attempted to speak of Holy Communion? Let St. Augustine say one word for us, and let us leave that which is too much for us: “O Truth, who art Eternity; O Love, who art Truth; O Eternity, who art Love! All over I tremble with love and awe, as if I heard this voice from on high: I am the food of men; grow and thou shalt feed upon Me; nor shalt thou convert Me, like the food of thy flesh, into thee; but thou shalt be converted into Me.”

This week, Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. The Corn of wheat is bruised for our iniquities that it may become to us the “the Bread of life,” the pure bread, without the leaven of corruption, the bread that feeds the

soul, that staves off eternal death and ensures resurrection ; the bread that unites us to Christ, and to all that are in Him, quick and dead, in earth and in heaven ; for in Him we are one bread, just as many grains of corn are ground and mingled into one bread. Here is the Tree of life restored, that we may eat and live for ever. Here is the Passover that all true Israelites must eat, that they may escape from the bondage of Egypt. Here is the Table spread in the midst of our enemies. Here is the Manna in the wilderness ; of this we must eat, or we must starve, for there is no other food for the soul. Here is more than Elijah's bread, in the strength of which we may go to the Mount of God. Here is the daily bread we daily pray for, the last best gift of our Father in heaven. Here is the mysterious power of life that shall survive death and the grave, just as life lies hid in seed, and plant, and tree, all through the dead winter, and buds forth at spring-tide. Nay, away with type and symbol ; here is our Lord Himself. Oh, come, let us eat and worship. Oh, come, let us believe and do. Hear His own word. To all that will He cries, "Come and eat ; I am the Bread of life."

But to some He has other words to say : "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?" Satisfieth not, no ; the immortal soul is hungry and unsatisfied in the midst of the good things of the world and of the flesh ; man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God—the Word who is God, the Word made flesh, the Word who is the Bread of life. God alone is the food of the soul ; God alone can satisfy it. Why will any continue prodigals among the swine, their belly fain to eat their dry husks, when there is bread enough for us and to spare in our Father's house, and He bids us come and eat ? O

the perversity of men ! Once God said, " Eat not or you die," and man would eat ; now God says, " Eat and live," and man will not eat !

When first our Lord uttered these words, many of His disciples said, " This is a hard saying ; and from that time they went back and walked no more with Him." It is so still ; still it is a hard saying to the hard ; still men draw the line here ; to this point they will walk with Christ, but at the Holy Communion they go away. Easter is a great day of reckoning, a great day of sifting and separation ; men take their sides of their own free will, and the Bread of life is the boundary between side and side. It may well be for there comes the great Easter Day, when all shall have to take sides, and that for ever ; and He who is called the Bread of life shall be in the midst, and men shall range themselves on His right hand and His left, taking involuntarily and of necessity the places they have been long accustomed to take ; their own choice, in this our time of choice, confirmed and rendered final by death, made irrevocable and unalterable by the lapse of time into eternity.

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### GOOD FRIDAY.

#### *The Cross the Centre of the World's Devotion.*

To those who can enter into the contemplation of the Passion, there seems but one suitable attitude—silent worship. The angels who were at Calvary must have worshipped in silent wonder. They knew what we know—that God was nailed to the Cross ; that God was dying for man. They saw the bodily tortures ; they

✓ knew something of the mental agony; most likely they knew more than we know; but, like us, they could do nothing but wonder and adore. That little band of saints about the Cross doubtless were silent. What could they say? There were probably degrees of intelligence among them. St. John understood much; Mary perhaps all that was being done. But there was no utterance; only silent unconscious tears trickling down; patient, brave, agonising endurance to the end. We can just see as it were afar off this silent worship; imagine it; long for it; envy the glorious spirituality of those of whom we read, who could spend hours in wrapt, loving, adoring contemplation.

Men rank and range themselves spiritually as they can get nearer to the Cross and abide there; and they will occupy the same ranks and places about the throne hereafter. We, alas! soon get bewildered, weary, distracted. Silence is golden, but we must have words. The fountain of our thoughts soon dries up; we must have help to tell us how to look upon the Cross and learn some of its lessons. Like the Ethiopian prince with Isaiah's Passion picture in his hand, we must have some mortal with us to guide, to help us to understand, and adore.

We may not be with Mary, John, and Magdalen. Peter stands afar off, but too near for us. We know our place; let us kneel there and look. What do we see? "Jesus in the midst." We seem to be upon an exceeding high mountain, and to behold all the kingdoms of the world, all the history of mankind, from the creation to the end of all things. As we gaze we see this clearly, that "Jesus is in the midst;" Jesus on His Cross, Jesus the Desire of all nations, Jesus the Redeemer of the world. Before Calvary, all faces turn and look onward

to it; since, all faces turn and look back towards it. There is a boundless sea of human faces, and "Jesus in the midst."

As soon as sin came into the world, there was the word of hope given, and men turned their eyes towards Calvary. Eve welcomed her first born son as the Saviour. There was something about Noah's birth that led men to hope in him. Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced. Even those races of men that wandered away from the original tradition still retained the hope of a Saviour, still clung to sacrifice, the sacrament of Calvary. Now that the great day has come and gone, what do we see? There is still a sacrifice, still a sacrament, and it points back to Calvary, as those old-world sacrifices pointed onwards to Calvary. St. Paul tells us that the Eucharist "shows forth the Lord's death till He comes again," and all shadows flee away at the great Easter morning, the day without evening, light without shadow.

So then as we stand on our vantage-ground the maze of human faces gains order, the labyrinth of events reveals its clue. There are two vast multitudes whom no man can number, the one gazing this way, the other that way; two great congregations kneeling in loving adoration, as it were facing each other. All eyes turned upon one central object, all hearts bowed one way; for there, between the two, drawing all men unto Him, is "Jesus in the midst." Jewish blindness set Him upon His Cross, Roman policy of order crucified Him, the greed of Judas betrayed Him; but what were these but typical crimes—common, often repeated? Look at either crowd, and see Pilate, Judas, and Caiaphas repeated in every age, the same men with other names. It was mankind that rejected God; it was mankind that betrayed and crucified Jesus. It is

human nature that must bear the blame, as it is mankind at large that gains the benefit.

The devout soul says, "I do not understand the mystery of the Atonement; I do not know how it will benefit those who never heard of it; I am bewildered with the doctrines of election and reprobation. Only this I see, the infinite families of mankind lost and ruined, but 'Jesus in the midst;' Jesus on His Cross; Jesus, Saviour of sinners; 'the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;' the Good Shepherd is giving His life for the sheep."

Do we even now know all? The price paid is infinite. Shall we read the words literally, "taketh away the sins of the cosmos"? The universe seems infinite; is there sin throughout the universe? did the Atonement reach unnumbered worlds? was "Jesus in the midst" upon this little globe, doing a work for all His creation which each starry night reveals to our bewildered gaze? This we know not; but we know enough—enough to send us to our knees here in gratitude and hope; enough to fill our mouths hereafter with that unending song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He hath redeemed us to God by His blood."

There is some little told us of that coming life beyond the grave; evidently it is above our present faculties to understand, for what is told is mostly allegory. But one thing is told us plainly, that there "Jesus is in the midst." "The Lamb as it had been slain." The Cross not forgotten; its wounds still seen, still rejoiced in; the wounds as Thomas saw them in the upper chamber, when Jesus was in their midst giving them Peace, and that heart that had fainted with doubt was bowed down with loving wonder and adoration, and those poor lips, that

had uttered such weak, foolish words, could say no more than this, "My Lord and my God."

What now remains? There remains daily life, with its cares and temptations, with its joys and blessings, and "Jesus in the midst;" in His house of prayer, according to His most sure promise; in His own ordinance, where His death is shown forth. Nor there only, but in homes, in families, in streets and busy ways, in this poor world as it is, with all its woes and puzzles, all its passing joys, He is not far from any one of us. In the fiery furnace the three faithful ones found One with them like the Son of God; on the way to Emmaus, He was with those two as they were sad; when Saul was haling men and women to prison and death, He was there among them. Where there is suffering, there is He; where there is a cross, there is the Crucified.

What would we more? There is one thing more. Each human heart is a little world. Oh, what a strange place it is! what contradictions! what meanness! what capabilities for uncommitted sins! what a history it has! and yet are not these words true of it, "Jesus in the midst"? He was between two thieves when first this was said of Him; all too true a picture of hearts that have robbed and murdered so much; and yet He disdained not to hang there, and die, and do His saving work. Let there only be the Cross within, and the Crucified will be there too. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." To such the Crucified says, "Lo, I am with you always."

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## EASTER EVE.

*The Departed Remembering the Means of Grace.*

When any one near and dear to us has been taken from us, we wonder where they are, what they are doing, whether they are thinking of us, whether they know anything of our present life and its circumstances. It is so strange that one so lately and for so many years always with us, so intimately connected with everything that concerned us, should now seem totally cut off from us and from all that would have so intensely interested him had he still been here. Often the bitterness of the first pang, when death had indeed come, revives again with all its original agony, when in some important crisis it seems as if we really could not do without that familiar face, that voice, the approval of those loving eyes. In the midst of crowds there is desolate loneliness; while dear good friends are all kindness, the poor heart yearns only for one who cannot come, and so it is thankless and unsatisfied.

It does seem strange that the dead are so completely severed from us. We might have thought that since Christ did so much, revealed so much respecting the departed, He would have even made some way of communion, opened some little door through which at least a whisper might pass from hence to them, from them to us; or, if that might not be, that through the holy angels or by some sacramental channel there might have been at least spiritual intercourse between soul and soul, which should have given proof of existence, of love, of interest. But no: the heathen were not more severed from their



dead than we Christians are from ours. Their dear names may still be in our prayers ; we may feel at perfect rest respecting them, knowing that they are nearer our Lord ; we may feel sure they still love us, think of us, pray for us ; we may look on to the day of reunion with an earnestness that sometimes borders on impatience ; but for the present they are out of reach, out of sight, out of hearing ; they are to us as if they were not. We never doubt they are conscious ; they cannot have forgotten this life ; all that they did and were they must remember, for it has all gathered new importance as they see its bearing upon their eternal state. Even the atmosphere of a sick-room changes the idea of life, and the presence of death makes familiar things look so very different, and alters the value of almost everything about us. If this is so with the spectator, what must it be to the soul that passes through silence and darkness into the world beyond ? The body, with all its sensations, its wants, its familiar associations, is gone ; this world is left behind ; all its busy doings, its restless plans and purposes, its great men, its sins, its rewards, all are done with for ever. Friends and dearer ones, but just now speaking to us, and we to them, are out of hearing ; nay more, the man's own nearest possessions are his no more. His papers are in the hands of others, and he cannot lift a finger to prevent eyes scanning what he intended to have destroyed. His very body, so lately the anxious care of himself and his best friends, is put away, and left fathom deep in the cold ground ; it is forgotten now, and is passing away into ruin and nothingness.

But there must be one remembrance of life very vivid in the departed soul's consciousness—the remembrance of spiritual acts, prayers, communions, repentances, victories,

falls. If the ordinary events and circumstances of life must assume a new colour and attain an altered value as soon as the shadow of death has passed upon the man, surely the supernatural elements of the Christian's calling must start up into tremendous importance. We kneel in the well-known place in church, we join in the familiar words, we listen to the preacher's voice to-day, and we remember those who were once at our side, uniting with us in prayer and praise, in confession of sin, who went up with us to the Holy Table and received the Bread of life. They are here no more ; there are for them no more communions, no more warnings, exhortations, no more place of repentance. Those religious acts were building up their spiritual condition as it now is, and they can have no more of them. They are strong or weak now as they were true or false to their privileges in their lifetime. They are higher or lower in spiritual rank now and for ever as they corresponded to the grace at their disposal.

Will it help us to be more devout, more regular, more eager in our religious duties, if we thus recall to mind sometimes those who once were here with us, and are here now no more? Like them, we shall soon be gone ; like them, we shall soon be looking back upon hours spent in church, upon Lents, upon prayers and sermons, services and Communions, and we shall see that they were of awful importance to us, that they are passed away from us and gone for ever, and that they have been to us a blessing, a spiritual help, an eternal bettering of our soul's condition ; or that they were lost, wasted, misused, or even turned to our hurt. We are apt to forget this. People indulge in vague ideas of some future circumstances that are to change and raise their spiritual condition. It is a comfortable but mischievous delusion. " Now is the day

of salvation." These common services, these well-known prayers, these communions are God's instruments for our salvation and sanctification; we must use them and be blessed in them, or miss an opportunity, and lose precious time never to be regained.

Shall we take this thought at the end of Lent? We know not whether another Lent will be given to us; we know of nothing that we can call our own but the present moment. Shall we then, for the future, when we kneel down in church at the beginning of a service, take this thought to teach us how to use that service? Shall we think of those who were with us once and are gone, and remember that we shall soon be as they are, looking back at church services, and seeing how much depended upon them? How different would the aspect of our churches be if men and women came to them with this thought in their minds! What reverence there would be! what attention, what reality, what earnestness! And why should there not be this thought? why not these happy fruits of it?

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## EASTER DAY.

### *The Crucified at Easter.*

At Christmas the angels have a message for us; they have one also at Easter. As the down-hearted, terror-stricken women stood by the sepulchre on the first Easter morning, the angels said to them, "Fear not ye, for ye seek Jesus which was crucified."

But it will be said, "Is not this word 'crucified' out of place to-day?" To-day is the day of Resurrection, the day of life, the day of joy. Good Friday was the day of Crucifixion, the day of death, the day of sadness; but that is past. Let everything come in its own order; there is a time for everything; a time to rejoice as well as a time to weep. True; and yet it is not we who choose these words on Easter Day, but angels. They were thought fit to be spoken on Easter Day itself, at the sepulchre itself; are they not fit for this commemoration of Easter?

Can any be more fit? St. Paul declared he could and would know nothing else but Jesus crucified. All days, all seasons were in this alike to him, that upon all alike he himself remembered, and he preached to others, Jesus crucified. And had he not good authority for it? Did not the risen Jesus Himself remember His Cross? nay, did He not remind others of it? Did He not continually preach it? for did not His risen body bear in it the marks of nails and spear?

There is a legend of the primitive age that there appeared to a holy bishop a glorified being, robed, crowned, beautiful, majestic, and declared that he was Christ, and bade His servant adore Him. But the saint looked at him, and sought the marks of the Passion in hands and feet; and not finding them, denounced the apparition as a Satanic delusion; as indeed it was. Aye; and when the vision of the eternal glory was opened to John, when not only the risen Christ, but the ascended and glorified Christ, was seen by him in the midst of countless hosts of adoring angels and saints before the throne of the Almighty Himself, there appeared the "Lamb as it had been slain." The Cross and Passion

are remembered in heaven ; they may well be remembered on Easter Day.

What is it that the Church insists upon especially on Easter Day? What does she require all her children to do to-day, whatever they may do at other times? She bids all and each to come to the Holy Communion. To-day, more than on any other day of the year, the Lord's Table is crowded with guests. And what does the Easter Communion mean? What do we commemorate? Is it Christ risen? Nay; this Communion is like all Communion: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death." It is Jesus crucified whom we seek on Easter Day, as well as on all other days, in the Holy Communion.

The cross stands upon the church's gable. The cross stands at the church's east end before the eyes of all on Easter Day, as upon every other day throughout the year. The cross is never removed, never hidden; it is always there, to remind us at all times of Jesus crucified. Lent is past; Passion-tide is over; Easter has come, but still we seek Jesus crucified. And seeking Him on His Cross, we find Christ risen. It is those who are with Christ in His Passion who meet the risen Christ. They who will find Christ must follow Christ. He leads on, and all ends in the Cross; and then, beside the grave, when the worst has come, there is the risen Christ. First angels with their comforting word, "Fear not;" and then presently Christ Himself saying, "Peace, fear not."

"Fear not;" this is Easter greeting. "Fear not;" this is the word of Christ Himself in His glory to His disciple stricken down at the sight of His awful majesty. "Fear not;" thank God for that Easter message. For do we not fear? Do we not think we have cause enough to

fear? What has Lent taught us but fear? We have gone apart and thought upon the deep things of God and the soul, of sin, death, and judgment; we have meditated upon our Lord's life and our Lord's precepts; we have set our own lives beside the pattern, and what must be the end of all this but fear? Fear, that is the beginning of wisdom, the first step towards the knowledge of God, the knowledge of self; fear, that turns us back again to the narrow way, that makes us run with haste to the refuge, the Cross, and keeps us there. And when we are there, we are met by the words, "Fear not;" and so long as we there abide, those words never cease to be heard, for there is safety, there is pardon.

What is Easter joy but the learning of these words, "Fear not"? Easter is not heaven; we are still on earth, still tempted, still labouring, suffering, far from our journey's end, not yet safe, not yet crowned. Jesus alone stands upon the shore, but we are still in the midst of the waves and storms of this troublesome life. Our joys are mixed and alloyed; they fade like the flowers that we gather to deck our festival. It is useless, it is foolish to pretend that we have what we have not, and cannot have yet. There is not yet the fulness of joy, the perfection of peace and rest; there is not yet, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord," but only this much, "Fear not."

Is it objected that this is to dull the glory of the Easter festival, to rob it of its full blessedness, to throw a shadow upon its sunshine? But is it so? What was Easter to those first Christians? A joy indeed, a surprise, a wonder so great that they could not grasp it. The Apostles would not at first believe. Thomas held back for a whole week; and when at last the great truth was indeed grasped, their Lord kept Himself from them, only showed Himself

at times, and then presently went away and left them, and they saw Him no more. Left them to work, to suffer, to be shamed, and abused; left them to be martyred.

Yes, Easter is not heaven; it is but a shadow of the good things to come. Let us not lay upon it more than it will bear; let us not be unreal; let us not try and force feelings that do not come naturally, that do not yet belong to us.

“Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.” This was the angel’s Easter message to those who stood by the grave of their Lord. Let us too take it to ourselves. We seek Jesus which was crucified; daily we seek Him; daily we lay our wants before Him; daily we confess our sins to Him; daily we thank Him for all He has done for us. We seek Jesus which was crucified; we seek Him where He has promised to meet us when we are gathered together in His name in His house. We seek Him where He tells us He is—in His Sacrament. Him we seek first; Him chief, Him always, Him crucified. And to-day a voice from heaven bids us, “Fear not;” for they who seek Him shall find Him; they who seek the Crucified here shall find the risen Christ hereafter; and finding Him, shall be like Him, raised from death to life, never more to die.

There are present troubles, but they will not break our hearts; the angel says, “Fear not.” There are sins we cannot conquer and be rid of; but the angel bids us, “Fear not,” so long as we ever take them to Jesus crucified. There are dark clouds lowering and threatening the future; but the angel says, “Fear not.” There is the dark day of death, there is the dreadful day of judg-

ment; but still the angel says, we need not fear, if only we ever seek Jesus which was crucified.

What more would we have? What better word for us this Easter Day? Does not the sun shine brighter, and the heart beat fuller, and the eye lighten, and hope kindle, and all things seem lighted up and glorified? Does not life appear something higher and better? Do not troubles and sorrows seem more bearable? Do we not feel endued with power and vigour? Do we not start onward with new energy, and purpose, and confidence, this good glad Easter Day, as the glorious angel looks into our faces and our heart and says, "Fear not?" Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified."

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## EASTER MONDAY.

### *The Difficulty of Easter Joy.*

It is easier to keep Lent rightly than to keep Easter rightly. True, the world leaves us alone while we are keeping Lent and at other penitential times, and comes pushing in upon us when we celebrate Easter, Christmas, and other Church festivals. But the world has really neither part nor lot in the matter, in the one case or in the other.

It is true that it is difficult to keep the mind and soul attent upon the grave and anxious thoughts of Lent, and upon the solemn verities of Passion-tide. The earnest Christian man or woman looks back upon Lent when it is over, and sighs, and says, "It has been but ill kept. I have tried; I have done better than I did once; but



how much better might it have been to me!" But is it not still more difficult to make Easter joy a reality? to enter into the joy of our Lord, and exult in His victory and ours? Do not most earnest souls find it so? Easter is more of heaven than of earth; and we are sorely, sadly conscious that we are still on the earth. Easter soars, but our soul cleaveth to the dust. Easter is all brightness; but, do what we will, there are dark corners still in our hearts; darkness that may be felt, and that will not be quite chased away. It is easier, more natural, after all, in this world to sing "Miserere" than "Alleluia." Christ's Passion is over; ours is not. We are saved, but not yet safe; we are sanctified, we are the children of light, citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, elected from the world, following Christ; and yet we are still in the midst of the fight with sin; we dare not claim yet the victor's crown.

There is an all-pervading gravitation towards sadness that sooner or later does its work upon every human heart. The young are full of hopes; nay, they are quite sure that the world is going to be a good and bright world to them; but years pass, and the brightness has dimmed; gaiety is artificial and temporary; sadness normal, natural, universal. There is generally some cloud that more or less hides the sun; and if not, the ethereal blue itself is, after all, a negative and penitential colour. The greater part of ballad music, the most popular airs of all nations, are in the minor key. Bad news is more readily believed than good news. Jacob never doubted that Joseph was torn in pieces when his sons showed him the blood-stained coat, but they had hard work to persuade him afterwards that Joseph was alive, in high place, and waiting to embrace him. When Moses came

to Israel in Egypt and spoke to them of freedom, they would not listen to him, broken as they were with anguish of heart and cruel bondage. Thomas was too sad to go to the assembly of the disciples, and to believe that they had really seen their Lord when they said so. So with multitudes of instances. The human spirit is elastic, but beyond a certain point great and prolonged pressure will crush it down, so that it cannot recover itself. The sorrows of humanity for these many thousand years have been cumulative, and have left their permanent impress upon man's very nature. The present age is sadder than the old-world times. All sceptical ages must be melancholy ; for if this life be all, what so sad as to have so many hopes and such poor realisations ! There are instances recorded of prisoners so long shut up that they have lost all care for liberty, and when made free they have returned to their dungeon. Besides all this, there is spiritual despondency ; the saying that it is of no use to try ; the giving up in despair because of the recurrence of temptation, the persistency of habits, the difficulties of progress, a morbid self-depreciation, magnifying faults and minimising merit.

Now it is with all these depressing influences that there is contention when we are called to Easter joy ; and before it can be real they must one and all be overcome ; and it is just because they are seldom thoroughly overcome that true Easter joy is so difficult and so rare. A child is careless and gay, but men and women have cares and anxieties that make them grave. Those who have become as little children, whom Christ praises, have attained a childhood like the childhood of Christ, pure, bright, and gay without giddiness ; a childhood of simplicity, along with a manhood of experience and wisdom. They have

already entered into the kingdom of heaven, where tears are wiped away, and there is no more sighing. It is not that such have no feelings, much less that they have not their share, and more, of this world's ills and pains, but that they are indeed risen with Christ, having died with Him to sin and the world. They have passed through, and out of the purgative way, and have entered upon, and made progress in, the unitive way.

Melancholy and despondency are great hindrances in the spiritual life. We must not always be absorbed in ourselves and our sins. If they are confessed and pardoned, let them be. Leave the things behind, and reach on to the things before. The Church says to us at each Communion, "Lift up your hearts." If we sit mourning like Hagar, we shall not mend our troubles; but if we lift up our eyes, we shall see an angel and a well of water. Magdalen sat by the graveside blinding herself with weeping, looking only down into the empty grave; it was not till she turned and "lifted herself up" that she found the living Christ and unalterable joy.

Have we been sinners? Do we think we ought to go mourning all our days and keep perpetual Lent? Nay, this must not be. Our Lord appeared on Easter morning to her who had been a sinner to teach us otherwise. The angels reproved her for tears on Easter Day: "Woman, why weepest thou?" There is a time to weep, but there is a time also for joy. If there is no other, there should be the joy of sympathy with our Lord in His rest from His Passion, in His glory and victory.

Oh, if we will but think and thank, surely true joy will come. Even the saddest and most suffering have spiritual blessings and joys. If the overshadowing cloud be dark, it makes the brightness of the coming sunshine more

lovely. Let us go on counting up blessings, and we shall have no time to brood over troubles. Let us live more in the gladness of our sure hopes, and we shall be anchored fast in the midst of the waves of this troublesome world. We must not rest too much in feelings; they are mostly but the empty grave where Jesus was, not is. We must turn from ourselves to the living Christ. He does not expect much of us; He does not leave us much to do; but that little we must do, and no one can do it for us. We must turn, rouse ourselves, raise ourselves, make an effort. We dishonour Christ by not rising to our due position, by not being what we may be. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." This is the Easter response to the complaint, "My soul cleaveth to the dust."

As we put forth energy we find it. Work will often refresh us more than rest. We can do things because we determine we will do them. How then shall we get Easter joy? Get we first a clean heart, a heart purged from sin; for sin and sadness are inseparable; next, a firm hold on Christ by faith and hope; and He will lift us up, and make us dwell with Him in heavenly places, whence sorrow and sighing have fled away.

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## EASTER TUESDAY.

### *Spring and the Resurrection.*

All lovers of nature, that is, all men and women with healthy minds, and souls that have not been deadened by sin, or degraded out of human shape by grovelling among

foul and base things ; all men and women who are in any degree what God intended them to be, admire and wonder at the beauties of spring. Who does not love spring flowers ?

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Who has not stooped with loving admiration over the first crocus, with its exquisite shape, its tender colouring, its purity, its subdued fragrance, standing among the dead leaves of last year, beneath trees and shrubs that still are apparently dead, having by some mysterious power forced its way through the rough cold ground, the harbinger of spring ?

“Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous,  
God has written in the stars above ;  
Yet not less in the bright flowerets under us  
Stands the revelation of His love.”

High up in the Alps one may see the fragile wild crocus, with its tiny petals, almost transparent, so thin and delicate are they, sunning itself within a few inches of deep banks of snow, standing in the midst of their icy drippings, and upon a spot that a day or two before was itself buried deep under the snow. Who has not stood still, struck dumb with delight, or forced to give vent to an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, as he has suddenly come upon a wood carpeted with blue hyacinths, or a bank thick with violets, loading the air with delicious perfume ?

Those who have travelled in the tropics, and have seen the treasures of our hothouses growing wild in their native woods, tell us that, after all, an English meadow in spring, with its green grass, its buttercups, and other flowers in

lavish luxuriance, is the most beautiful floral sight that the eye can feast upon—

“Weeds, only weeds, perchance these flowers may be,  
Yet fair enough, my Lord, for Thee and me.”

The natives of hot latitudes, where spring and autumn are unknown, when they come to Europe, feel their souls quickened with new experiences of pleasure when for the first time they watch the revival of nature after its winter death. Here a whole hillside of elms is reddening at every twig with buds that come forth from wood that seems hard and lifeless; there pendent catkins hang nodding from every branch; there there is a faint tinge of tenderest green where the corn, an inch or two high, is seen in perspective on the distant parts of the field; elsewhere it melts into the rich brown soil, like some delicate fabric of shot-silk.

Those whose lot is cast in the huge hideous towns of modern times miss much of this; but, thank God, there are other spring-tide delights which they may see and enjoy, and that all the year round. Human life has its spring, as truly as trees and flowers have theirs; and how beautiful it is! The child, the youth, the maiden; how it charms the eye and satisfies the soul to watch their grace and loveliness; to see the health, the brightness, the eager ebullition of life, the subtle, gradual development of feature and intellectual power! How sweet, in contrast with the world's falseness, is the innocence of the child, its confiding trust, its buoyant hope, unsoured by deceits and disappointments! Beautiful period! well may the Maker, the Saviour of mankind, hold it up as the pattern of the higher spiritual life, and commend the white souls of children as the models after which His

disciples should try and mould their inner selves! If, as it is said, half mankind die in childhood, a new force is given to those words of His, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But it is as a time of revival of life from death, that spring is especially wonderful. To the Christian it is a perpetual parable of Resurrection. St. Paul found it so. The buried and rotting seed bursting out into vigorous and beautiful life, was to his mind the truest symbol of our Easter hope. Without this, spring with all its beauties, cannot but bring melancholy thoughts. The bright flowers smile indeed in the cemetery, but the loved dead below do not return to us. Childhood is lovely, youth captivates us, but when we ourselves are going downwards towards the grave, failing here and there sensibly, the painful contrast will obtrude itself; and the sigh follows quickly after the sensation of admiration. The heathen felt this most cruelly. The cultured Greeks, with their vivid delight in beauty, were chilled and appalled by the very thought of death. The garden at springtide made them sad, for they mourned for their dead as lost to them for ever. They said,

"Alas! the flowers that in the garden die,  
Mallows and parsley and fair-blooming dill,  
Come forth, awakened by the vernal sky,  
And their own summer year again fulfil.

"But men, the wise, the mighty, and the brave,  
When once we die, have no fresh spring in store,  
But all unheard of, in the silent grave,  
Sleep the ne'er-ending sleep, for evermore."

Shall we go back to this? In France, a century ago, triumphant Atheism wrote over the cemetery gates,

"Death is a perpetual sleep." All over the civilised world there is now again an apostolate of unbelief labouring and making converts. But is this progress? In mathematics where a line of argument opens, it is followed out to the result, and if it leads to contradiction and absurdity, it is abandoned as untrue. If the subtle reasonings of modern thought seem sound and unanswerable, may we not follow the same course, and judge of their truth by their final results? Let us imagine Atheism accepted throughout Europe; history will help us partly to judge what would happen, logical reasoning will complete the picture; and if utter chaos, the loss of all that is noble and sweet, the degradation of man, and the extinction of civilisation; if these are the fruits of Atheism accepted and carried to its natural, logical, and inevitable results; then, though we may not be able to reply to all arguments, or solve all difficulties, shall we not say that we are certain the premisses must be unsound, when the conclusion is so fatal? Shall we not cling to faith, though some tell us we are fools for our pains; though we feel ourselves sometimes as the disciples of our Lord must have felt on Good Friday and the day after, or as Magdalen felt, when she stood with tear-dabbled face, and broken-hearted, on Easter morning by the empty tomb, and cried, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him?"

St. John says, "In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a sepulchre; there they laid Jesus." Was that an accident? Again we read, "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which He entered." There was enacted the Agony, there the Betrayal. Is this too all chance? Moses tells us of man's



prime created state, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man, to dress it and to keep it." Is this a myth, meaningless? From Job to St. Peter we find the simile, "Man cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower."

Do we not see it all this Easter tide; the long mysterious story of life, and death, and Resurrection? The old Book, which the world is getting too clever to value, can any discoveries make it untrue? Can modern unbelief give us anything that will help us so much as this? When we stand beside the pale still body of one whom we have loved well, does not our instinct rebel against all doubts, and demand springtide for the highest creature of God, as we see He has given it to the lower? Jesus and the Resurrection, can we give them up? Does not the whole Bible seem to us to-day to be written to prepare us for keeping Easter? Is it not a series of records of resurrections? Just after the Fall, when death was first declared as Adam's doom, there was a promise of a Seed who should bring life from the dead. Noah's history was a resurrection. Abraham's heir came from "one as good as dead." Isaac on Mount Moriah, we read in Hebrews, was received back by his father "as from the dead." Jacob returned from exile multiplied, like the corn sown, an hundred-fold. Joseph was mourned as dead, but rose to honour and power at last. Moses was given over to death, but lived to be his people's saviour. And time would fail to tell of Job, of Samson, of David, of Jonah, of Daniel and his companions, of Jeremiah, and many more. What is the keynote of all the marvellous history of the people of Israel, but resurrection? What is the undertone that pervades the Psalms but the hope of life from death, life at last, in spite of all bitter experience,

"killing all the day long?" What is the history of the Christian Church but a series of resurrections? That handful of poor men in the upper room, thrown broadcast upon the wide, wicked world, was the seed-corn of the Catholic Church of to-day and of eternity. Persecution seemed to kill and bury the faith, but it had its Easter presently. Heresy was a more dangerous Calvary, but again the Church had her Easter, and came forth with new life. The Barbarians swept it away, but by and by in deserts and forests the spring flower appeared. The patient cenobite had guarded the seed, and it sprang up and brought forth fruit, till the renewed world became the harvest-field of God.

If then there are now once more looming shadows of death impending over the Church and the faith, shall we despair? If it be that evil times are coming, and that seven other spirits worse than that which was cast out of man by Christ, are bounding onward to take possession of the empty, swept, and garnished house, still we look for resurrection, the Church "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," the Paradise of God, which St. John saw, where flowers bloom that never fade, and where spring is eternal.

Resurrection for the Church, and for man in the future; resurrection in type, and shadow, and symbol, resurrection in history, in the faith; all this we have seen; but is this all? Is there not something wanting still to make Easter our own glad Festival, to bring its great blessed message home to each of our poor sin-soiled hearts, that know that spiritual ecstasy and high and great things are not for us? Is there yet any other kind of resurrection? Something more homely, more within our grasp and experience? Thank God, yes. What was

it that happened to us when, yet unconscious, we were presented to God, and, by water and the Holy Ghost, died unto sin, and rose again unto righteousness? Was not that resurrection? And many times since, when sin had surprised us, or we had wilfully transgressed, but God in His pity had given us the grace of repentance, and when we knelt at His feet and cried, "Father, I have sinned, and thus and thus have I done," and He according to His sure promise pardoned our sin, and we passed from death unto life; what was that but resurrection, most blessed and glorious resurrection?

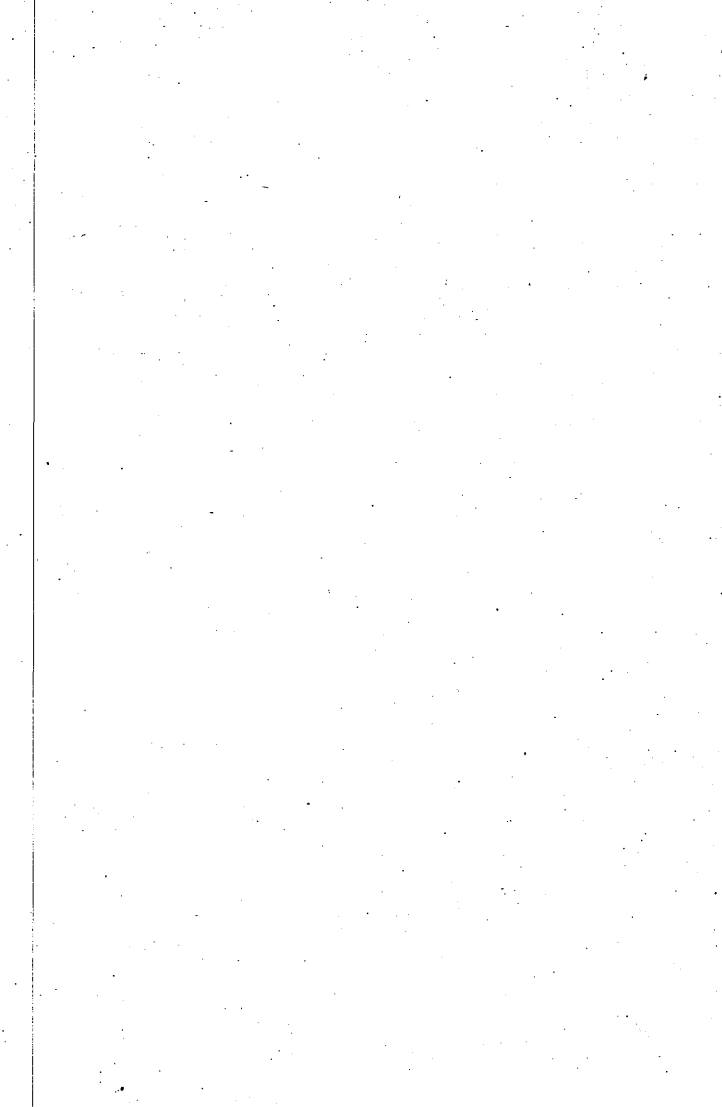
Spring, Hope, Resurrection, we cannot do without these; human life is not worth having without them. How true are those well-known lines—

"This is the state of man ; to-day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hopes : to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him :  
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,  
And then he falls."

Those who are no longer children know that human hopes are ever like that, temporal hopes and spiritual hopes alike. We are ever being surprised and crushed by disappointments. But then to every brave man there always comes the spring of hope after the winter of his disappointment; to every Christian man there always comes the spring of new beginnings after the surprises of sin, or the frailty, or the wilfulness of a fall. "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth again." The Christian soldier is often beaten down, but he springs to his feet again, crying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall rise again."

Yes, thanks be to God, what is the history of every Christian man's spiritual life but a series of new beginnings, of spring-like revivals, of life from the dead? Already "we are risen with Christ." Oh that we may die no more! Or, if sin kill us, may His voice once more call us; His hand raise us up; His touch restore us to life; that there may be spring-tide in our souls; and that that which was barren and desolate "may rejoice and blossom as the rose;" till we come to the promised land, Paradise restored, where some of our dear ones are already; where the Tree of Life stands yielding her fruit every month; and "there is no more death."

THE END.



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